

MARCH

MASTER DETECTIVE

THE CASE OF
THE SLAIN
WIDOW WHO
“LIVED”
AFTER DEATH

UNMASKING
A MODERN
BORGIA

THE STRANGE STORY
OF MARTHA MAREK

15^c
A MAGAZINE PUBLICATION



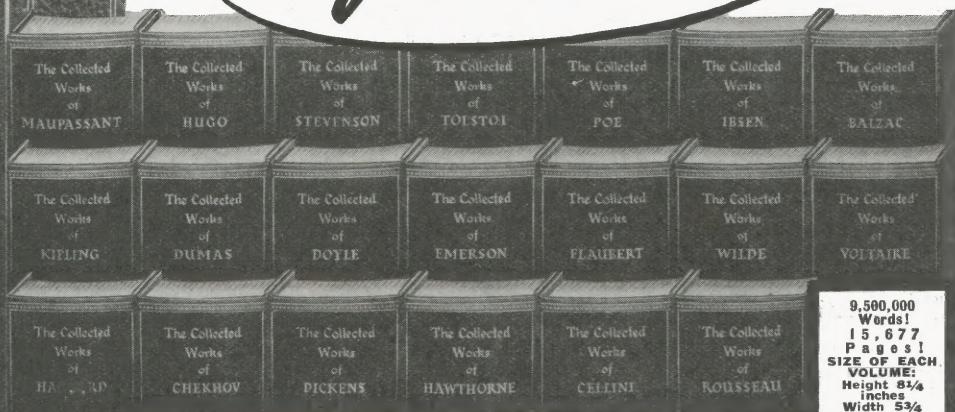
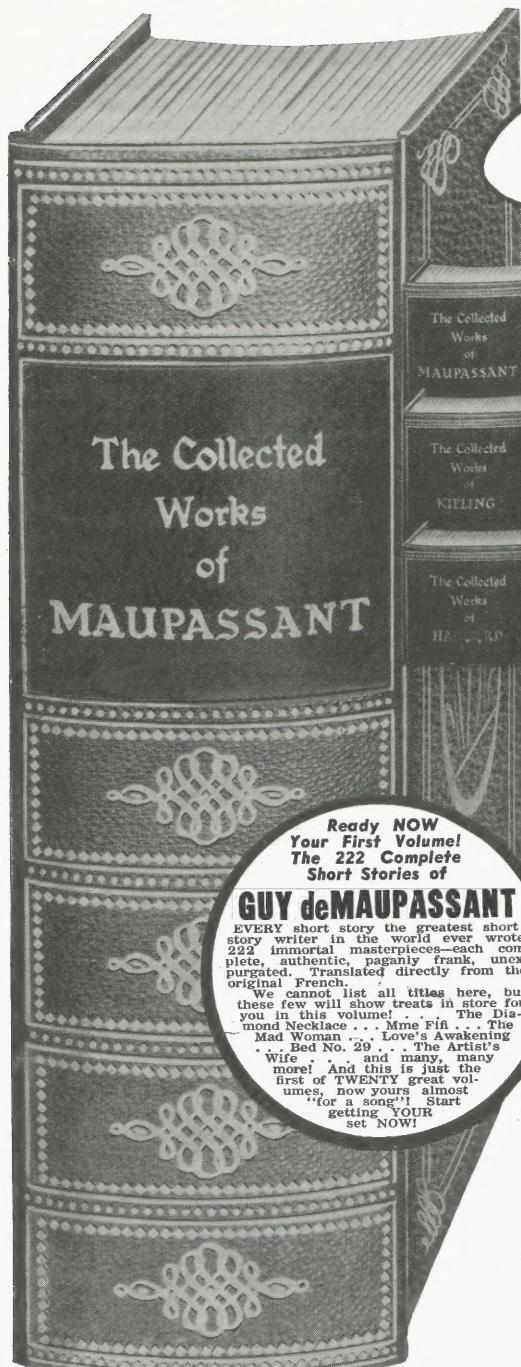
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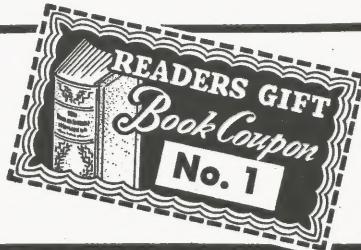
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MASTER DETECTIVE

A MACFADDEN PUBLICATION ★ VOL. 20 ★ NO. 1

MARCH, 1939

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COVER BY A. R. McCOWAN

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Next Month

SOLVING THE SECRET OF
THE SEALED ENVELOPE

With diabolical cunning, a scheming man plots to take the life of a beautiful woman—and make her death appear to be suicide. But shrewd detectives refuse to accept surface facts despite a "secret" message in a sealed envelope. Although all apparent incriminating traces have been skillfully eliminated, the investigator makes an important observation and the "metered death" mystery moves forward to a dramatic conclusion.

CLUE OF THE BROKEN GUN—
How We Tracked Indiana's
Phantom Killers

It is noontime at a corner drug store in South Bend. Kindly, be-spectacled Louis C. Kreidler, returning from the bank with money to cash factory employees' payroll checks, hears the harsh command of a snarling bandit, sees a menacing gun. The weapon speaks and the druggist drops mortally wounded; the robbers flee. With a broken gun-tip their only clue, police begin an action-packed pursuit of these phantom killers who pile up fresh crimes. Then detectives remember the French proverb "*Chez la femme*" and . . .

THE RIDDLE OF THE MAN IN
THE BLACK MASK

Alone on a desolate Connecticut farm and confronted by a murderous burglar whose face is masked, an attractive young mother makes the supreme sacrifice to protect her six-year-old daughter. Later, in the fading light of a winter day, grim-faced citizens join the forces of law and order to track down the slayer. Faced by apparent defeat, a quick-thinking county detective brings the strange case to an exciting finish.

THE MYSTERY OF THE FIVE
KEYS AND THE RIFLED
VAULT

The head teller of a prominent Brooklyn bank deposits \$25,000 in a closely guarded vault. When he returns several hours later the money has mysteriously disappeared. Five men know it has been placed there and these five alone have keys to this vault. New York detectives face a baffling problem intensified by a bizarre midnight visit. But modern police methods triumph in one of 1938's most unusual crimes.

These and many other gripping true stories will be featured in the big April issue of *MASTER DETECTIVE*, on sale at all news stands March 15th.

(Above schedule subject to change)

Breaking the “KIDNAP TRUST”



(Above) Curious throngs crowded around Ukrainian Hall after G-men ascertained that it was the headquarters of a ruthless band of kidnapers. (Left) Arthur Fried, wealthy White Plains, New York, man, who was kidnapped and then murdered. (Right, reading down) Demetrius Gula, William Jacknis and John Virga who were arrested.

J. EDGAR HOOVER, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, was seated behind the desk in the austere furnished office in the New York City Federal Building. The members of the press who were ushered into the room did not know why they were summoned.

Hoover came directly to the point.

“Gentlemen, we have solved three New York kidnappings. One of them is murder,” he said in a matter-of-fact voice.

For a moment there was silence as the astounding nature of the statement sank in. Then Hoover continued, describing in detail the spine-chilling deeds perpetrated by the New York “kidnap trust.”

It began on the night of December 5th, 1937, when Arthur Fried, thirty-two, manager of the Bronx plant of the Colonial Sand and Gravel Company and a member of a wealthy White Plains, New York, family, went to the movies with his wife, sister, and brother-in-law. After the show, he was driven to his mother's twenty-room home where he was to pick up his own car and follow.

Fried, a slight, dapper man with an olive complexion, climbed into his own machine. The one containing his wife pulled away. Four hours later, his car was found abandoned near a tavern on Mamaroneck Avenue. The family, frantic with worry over his non-appearance, notified the police. At four a. m. the telephone rang.

“Don't worry about Arthur,” a gruff voice said. “He's had too much to drink, but he'll be all right. You'll hear from him in a day or two.”

Before any questions could be asked, the caller hung up.

The following day the first of a series of ransom notes was received. It demanded \$200,000 on pain of death. Later negotiations whittled this figure down to \$50,000. The victim's brother, Hugo, who served as intermediary, went to a midtown Manhattan bar, found the kidnapers' directions on a shelf in the washroom, and proceeded to the Loew's Commodore in downtown Manhattan where he was to contact the men who held his brother prisoner.

When they failed to furnish satisfactory proof that Fried was alive and in their possession, Hugo left without making the payment. Although he did not know it at the time, his brother was already dead.

Months later, a minute after midnight on March 23rd, 1938, Norman Miller, nineteen, was seized by two armed men as he left a Brooklyn motion picture show. He was held in

Manhattan. The kidnapers asked \$100,000 ransom, but later reduced it to \$13,000. This amount was placed in a garbage container at 23rd Street and First Avenue the following morning, and the youth was released.

A month later, Benjamin Farber, a coal merchant, was snatched in broad daylight as he sat in his car in front of the Brighton Beach branch of the National City Bank. He was released the same night when an intermediary tossed \$1,900 over the side of the Williamsburg Bridge at the signal of a member of the mob who stood below.

It was Norman Miller's keen ears which furnished the first lead. He had heard church bells, a swing program, and the clicking of pool balls. Trained G-men ran down the clues of these assorted sounds, traced them to Ukrainian Hall, a dingy dance-hall on Manhattan's lower East Side. Three frequenters of the place, Demetrius Gula, thirty, the father of a son, and whose own father owns a concession in the hall; William Jacknis, twenty-seven, a WPA children's instructor; and John Virga, thirty-four, the father of two children, were suspected. These men were trailed for months before they were arrested. All three were indicted for the kidnapping of Miller and Farber, while Gula and Joseph Sacoda, a fourth member of the gang, who had in the meantime been sent back to Sing Sing for violation of parole, were indicted for the Fried kidnapping.

It was Sacoda's confession which told what had happened to the missing victim. He said Fried was blindfolded and Gula put a bullet through his head. The body was stripped and placed in the huge blazing furnace at the Ukrainian Hall. It took two days to complete the cremation. Gula's confession bore this out in all but one detail—he said that it was Sacoda who fired the shot.

Despite the absence of the corpus delicti making a murder charge against them untenable, the fact that New York State passed a “Lindbergh Act” making kidnaping a capital offense where the victim is not produced before the trial, places Gula and Sacoda in the shadow of the electric chair.

On December 15th, 1938, the trial of the two ringleaders opened in General Sessions Court in New York City, before Judge John J. Freschi. J. Edgar Hoover took the stand. As this issue goes to press a verdict has not been reached.

However, startling new disclosures that these men were part of an insurance-murder syndicate, as well as principals in the kidnap trust, have come to light.

Mr. Mattingly & Mr. Moore doff their hats to a great whiskey value!

"Oh, Mr. Mattingly,
Oh, Mr. Mattingly,
The way folks praise our
whiskey makes me blush..."



"What a brand!" "A peacherino!"
"M & M is really keen!" Oh,
Is it 'cause we slow distill
and never rush?"



"Yes, Mr. Moore,
Yes, Mr. Moore,
That's the reason many thousands
choose our brand..."



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Snaring

ROEDIGER

NOTORIOUS

MARRYING

SWINDLER

By

BERT BRUN

Suave and sinister George Fritz Roediger, bigamist and swindler. The diabolical cunning of his nefarious activities baffled the police of two countries, until the day when, over-playing his hand, he became enmeshed in a net laid by keen-minded sleuths



MARRIAGE by correspondence, while by no means unknown in the United States, is much more common in Europe where it frequently is regarded as offering a last daring thrust at tedium and an intriguing possibility for the replenishing of empty pocketbooks.

Hence, many European newspapers bristle with matrimonial advertisements, through which members of both sexes seek contact with other "hungry hearts."

Such advertisements present the masses with daily opportunities for vicarious thrills. Thousands are inveigled by the chances thus offered in love's lottery. But, unfortunately, these advertisements also provide an open door to men and women who, through displays of counterfeit affection, lure unsuspecting victims to financial or physical doom.

There are, of course, cases in which men who have followed the normal line of least resistance by marrying a girl from their own town or village, still keep a weather eye on the matrimonial market as presented in the papers. Should their marital ship founder, or their financial prospects sink beneath the surge of debts, they fall back on the "lonely hearts" advertisements as a glittering second string to Cupid's bow.

But in all the history of matrimonial columns, probably no advertisements have had the far-reaching, tragic aftermaths that followed the seemingly innocent lines inserted by George Fritz Roediger. This is the story of how a man, dominated by an insatiable greed for riches, finally was tracked down and brought to justice by the fine detective work of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other determined investigators.

George Fritz Roediger must have belonged to that class of predatory males to whom the affluent female is natural prey; a class that frequently sends its unscrupulous members to our shores.

According to the record he was born in Grobensiell, Germany. Little is known of his early life, but in 1920 we find him living in Bremen, married, and following his trade of

butcher and sausage-maker. His diversion after work was the reading of matrimonial advertisements.

His wife, Meta, had come from a fine German family, above him in station. She graced his home with housewifely skill and attractiveness of person. Later she added two children: Minnie and George. Thus her efforts toward making her husband's lot in life as pleasant as possible were carried out with sincerity and charm. They failed to save her from an untoward fate.

George Fritz had by this time passed his fortieth year, and Fortune had not dealt with him as kindly as he had hoped. He was a successful butcher and sausage-maker; he had a pleasant home, a gracious wife, and two children. That was all, except his dreams; and these were of an affluence that went beyond what his trade was likely to provide.

Life is short, especially when one has begun to tread its declining curve. George Fritz, in his early forties, without money or property enough to satisfy his ambitions, began to take an overweening interest in the wealth and possessions of others. Six times he was haled into court and convicted on charges of misappropriation and larceny.

Germany held little promise for the realization of the sausage-maker's dreams. So, casting his eyes about geographically, George Fritz finally decided that the New World offered him the greatest scope for his peculiar talents. Not only did tolerance reign there for the rich, the poor and the rascals, but distances were great, and he felt sure any unpopular activity on one coast would be disregarded on the other. Also, anything done in the good-natured United States, that might be displeasing to the authorities, would hardly disturb the equanimity of officials in the Canadian provinces.

Gathering his savings and his brood he took ship at Bremen with his family and his dreams for a fortune-hunting hegira beyond the blue Atlantic.

Just when he had decided to seize on Cupid's other string, cannot be definitely stated. It is highly probable that for some time before he left Germany his hands had itched to finger it. And doubtless as he trod the deck of the west-bound steamer, and while his wife and youngsters slept peacefully in their berths below, he was already making up his mind to surrender his faithful helpmate as a sacrifice to fortune.

The family arrived in Canada in 1926 and settled at St. Catharines, Ontario. Carrying out his carefully studied plan, George Fritz immediately began acquiring a reputation for industry and piety. The rough speech and bearing of the brawny butcher began to disappear. They were replaced by a suavity of demeanor and a persuasiveness of tongue that would have done credit to the sirens on their Mediterranean rock, luring sailors to destruction by the seductiveness of their words.

In the presence of neighbors he showered little attentions on Meta and the children. If he at any time adulterated the milk of human kindness in his dealings with them, he never did so in public. Regularly on a Sunday, with his fond wife on his arm, and his two children strolling with Sabbath demureness at his side, he walked to church and listened reverently to the Word of God, kneeling humbly in prayer with his family and his fellow townsmen. Presumably he checked his dreams of wealth at the door and reclaimed them when the homeward walk began. Then the suavity of his voice would border on the benign as he discoursed with Meta on the efficacy of prayer and the futility of worldly wealth.

There is little doubt that if the average law-abiding citizen displayed the persistency of men of the Roediger type, they would achieve much more than they customarily do. George Fritz' persistency was undoubtedly the result of an obsession, but it is still something at which to marvel. Nothing seemed to divert him one jot from the course he had charted for himself; neither normal human feelings nor the responsibility of parenthood. Similarly, the shadow of the noose and of the electric chair, which must at times have been plainly cast across his path, never prompted him to change his design for living by a single stroke.

He had now reached the point when Meta was swinging in the balance. He must have watched her closely and studied her possibilities, either as an aid or as a stumbling block to his plans. What his final decision was we may never know exactly. The events that followed lead one to believe that after due consideration of her virtues, the sausage-maker must have come to the conclusion that a secret confided to a woman is no secret at all.

META died suddenly and unexpectedly within a few months of the family's arrival at St. Catharines. Her startling fade-out from the Roediger family picture was made with such undue haste that the neighbors were mystified, and the police suspicious.

Mrs. Roediger was only thirty years of age, and according to her neighbors and friends, had been an unusually healthy as well as a happy young matron. The officers discussed her premature death with George Fritz. He answered their questions with tears dropping fitfully down his cheeks. He was heartbroken.

"I loved her so," he said to them. "I don't know how I'm going to manage with the children without Meta."

The tears of the brawny butcher, while having a sympathy-winning effect on the neighbors, were lost on the representatives of the law. They had an autopsy performed on the dead woman, and found evidence of poisoning with mercury. They delved into her husband's reputation for prudence. They learned that he had most providentially insured his wife for \$2,000 shortly before she passed away. Providentially, also, he was the sole beneficiary of the policy, and it was his thoughtfulness that had paid the premiums.

To find a husband with so much forethought expressed in such felicitous and close sequence, astonished the investigators so much that they arrested the unctuous sausage-maker and charged him with murder.

Not knowing his latent dreams of profitable matrimonial adventures yet to be, they accused him of having slain his wife for the insurance money. Conscious of the smallness of this amount, compared with the huge sums he anticipated from his adventures in America, he felt hurt at the charge.

"What kind of people are these," he said, using mixed English and German idioms, "that accuse me of murdering the woman I love—and for zwei thousand dollars?"

The evidence the officials were able to collect against the man, it must be admitted, was not as convincing as they would have liked it to have been. And it was to prove far less convincing than George Fritz himself. Through the courtroom he paraded neighbors and friends who told of his piety and industry; they spoke of his considerateness toward the departed Meta, and toward the two children she had borne him.

This sympathy for the large-fisted, sanctimonious sausage-maker, struggling with an aching heart against the heavy odds of the law, seemed to communicate itself to everyone, not connected with the prosecution, in the courtroom.

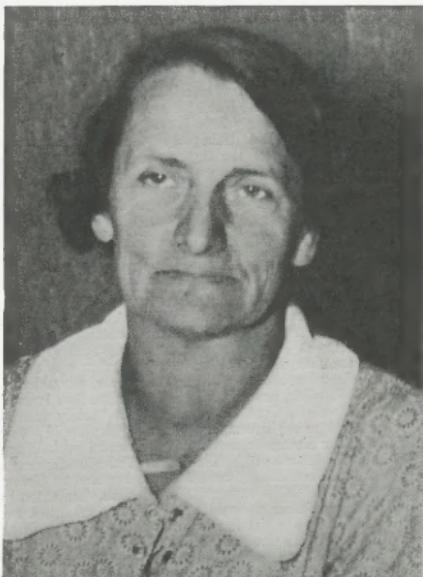
George Fritz took the stand himself. He explained that his wife had been ill and despondent. She had yearned for her beloved Germany. He believed she had taken her own life during one of her fits of depression. "I loved her so," he said, sobbing.

He was released; there had been insufficient proof of guilt.

What George Fritz' thoughts were when he walked from that courtroom, a free man, can only be conjectured. But the quickness with which he started on his piratical matrimonial adventures leads us to believe that in those moments he must have been swept by feelings of elation. The New World, or at least the feminine part of it, had now become his oyster.

One thing had happened. The craftiness of his plans had entered into his eyes, and forever after he was to express through their narrowed portals a slinkiness that was inescapable to any one not deceived by his over-buttered words.

From this point on the police of two countries found it difficult to trace the career of George Fritz Roediger, or to ascertain the number of his victims. It is doubtful if the full record of these will ever be known. How many women succumbed to his blandishments following the appearance of



Mrs. Julia Regitnig, whose realization of the duplicity of the man she knew as "George Brown," touched off one of Canada's most unusual criminal hunts

matrimonial advertisements in papers from coast to coast, it is impossible to estimate. Most of his known victims were brought into the limelight when he overstepped the bounds of his customary caution, and the law caught up with him.

But in tracing his crooked path the investigators did learn that the scheming sausage-maker from Bremen had amassed a tidy fortune; all collected from various women whom he married under different aliases. Some he deserted; a few died mysteriously; others deserted him when they found out what sort of leech had lured them to the altar.

CONSERVATIVE figures place the number of his marriages at between twenty and thirty; and when it is remembered that in Canada he married three women in a space of ninety days, his potentialities over a period of ten years become apparent.

His regular practise was to run a matrimonial advertisement in a newspaper and follow it with a whirlwind courtship. Before the honeymoon had dimmed he would get the money in his name. If the valuables of his victim were in property, he would dispose of it under one pretext or another. Then he would decamp, change his name, and begin over again. A completed love coup of his seldom took more than three or four weeks.

Certainly he wasted no time, tarrying no longer with his bride than was necessary for his persuasive tongue to bend her to his purpose. If his prospective victim balked and refused to turn over her worldly goods, he disappeared never to return. But in the light of what has been discovered, it may be said he was seldom empty-handed when he left his brides for good.

It is known that in 1927 he was pursuing his wife-hunting career in New York City. There he met a Miss Martha Stender, and after a typical whirlwind courtship, married her. Whatever the lure in the way of financial profit was, he didn't get it. Martha failed to succumb to his cajoleries. She left him in a hurry, and he had to fall back on matri-

monial advertisements again for new adventures in financial love.

How many victims he married during the three years following the Stender fiasco, and how much each contributed to his various bank accounts scattered through two countries, is not known.

In 1930 he again came into a clash with the law. That year he married a prospect named Betty Schmidt in New York State. She was an attractive girl; but her chief lure was the small fortune she had accumulated. Betty, without being subject to known fits of dizziness, unexpectedly fell down a well and was drowned.

The law reached out again, for once more the evidence seemed sufficient to snare the sausage-maker. It seized the suave George Fritz and brought him to trial for the murder of his wife. But George had already staged a series of scenes for neighbors, similar to those he had put on at St. Catharines four years before.

When formally charged by the New York police there seemed enough proof to convict, and there was Betty's little fortune as a motive.

The trial lasted much longer than the one at St. Catharines, and at times it looked as though Fate was about to terminate the career of the swindling butcher from Bremen.

But, as in the Ontario city, George took the stand in his own defense. In his most appealing tones he told the jury of his great love for Betty; of how happy they had been together until death intervened. He had paraded his witnesses to tell the twelve "good men and true," how kind and thoughtful he had always been to his beloved wife, and he referred to this unctuously in his own testimony. Then he turned on the tears again and cried like a child. His sobs echoed to the corners of the courtroom. Soon members of the jury were lamenting with him, to an accompaniment from some of the chorus of spectators.

"She must have taken her own life, and I can't understand why," he testified between convulsions of grief. "We were so happy together. What shall I do now without my Betty? Where can I turn without my Betty?"

The jury found George Fritz Roe-diger not guilty of the murder of his wife, Betty.

The New York police were dumfounded and indignant. But they were helpless; that is, helpless except for one thing. They sought and obtained the deportation of George Fritz to Canada as an undesirable alien. They thought they were through with him, never dreaming that he would come back into their clutches again in a most unexpected way.

There is another hiatus in his career, yet we can feel sure that every month was a month of marriage to him; with a regular balancing of the books to see how profits stood.

The law became acquainted with his activities again in 1931. In that year he married a Canadian girl, whose acquaintance he had made through a matrimonial advertisement. Again the wheels that usually ground the grist for his mill of gold must have got out of gear. His new wife died under strange circumstances, as the newspapers termed it. An investigation was made, but nothing conclusive was revealed. The doctors pronounced, and the police accepted, their diagnosis that death had occurred from epilepsy. This time, however, Fate was to play her favorite an ironic trick.

For some unexplained reason Roe-diger had used his right name when he married Martha Stender in Brooklyn, New York, and again when he married the girl "who died of epilepsy."

Just why he departed from his usual custom in (Continued on page 58)



This suitcase, discovered by Sergeant Veith, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, on a boat anchored off Port Dalhousie, Ontario, contained letters which put investigators on the trail of the vanishing bridegroom, George Roediger

How I Captured



LONG ISLAND'S RUTHLESS BANK BANDITS

O f all the thousands of crimes I have worked on, I consider the tracking of the desperadoes who held up the Bellmore Bank and murdered Ernest L. Whitman, war hero, my "pet case."

I don't want to make this a melodramatic story—rather, I would seek to detail coldly and precisely each step we took in hunting the five yeggmen with their diabolical leader, who, in committing the robbery and murdering an innocent, courageous citizen, perpetrated one of the most ruthless atrocities recorded in the police annals of Long Island.

As often happens in real life, this crime not only contains all the elements that fiction writers use in weaving thrillers, but it also brings in bizarre extraneous episodes that no conservative author would dare to introduce in his orderly manufactured plot. This case took place during prohibition days when speakeasies, bootleggers' nests and hijackers' hideaways were all part of the American landscape. Starting at the crossroads of a peaceful farming village on Long Island, the trail led us into famous roadhouses, and others not so well known, over the East River to a humdrum, respectable Bronx neighborhood, descended into the back rooms of notorious underworld dives and garish night clubs, and cross-trailed leads that exploded several other unsolved mysteries.

By our incessantly pecking away at countless intricate leads, we succeeded in involving individuals who belonged to widely separated circles of society, uncovered carefully guarded secrets, enmeshed many criminals who had long escaped conviction. There were to be at least three murders and one suicide before our investigation ended.

It was not until nearly noon of the day following the robbery and murder that I entered the case. At that time I was in partnership with Captain William A. Jones, the pistol expert, and John J. Fogarty, both of whom had been my brother officers in the Police Department of New York City. Jones had been retained the day before to examine the bullet extracted from the body of the murdered man and compare them with bullets in a gun which was found at the scene of the crime.

Jack Fogarty and I were in our office in

New York winding up the closing details of another murder when the telephone rang and summoned us to Mineola where District Attorney Weeks was busily engaged in examining eye-witnesses to the Bellmore job.

It was a summons we expected, for this was before Nassau County had its own detective force, and our firm was usually engaged to solve its major crimes.

On our way to the Long Island train, we grabbed copies of all the morning papers. On their front pages were huge headlines featuring the robbery as the star news of the day. It was a spectacular crime and columns were filled with details of facts and theories.

"No exploit," as one paper put it, "fabled or true of Jesse James or his brother, ever exceeded in pure lawlessness the raid yesterday upon the First National Bank of Bellmore, Long Island, New York, less than thirty miles from the Atlantic Avenue station, Brooklyn. Bellmore is on the Montauk Division, about six miles cross-country from Mineola, the county seat of Nassau County."

The popular theory seemed to be that the robbery had been committed by hijackers, who, in their runs over the Island, had picked the bank as an easy place to crack. There are vast

territories of woodlands on Long Island and it was thought possible that the bandits might race through them, steering for the barren bootleg fastness of the coast near Montauk.

As I am going to take the readers step by step through our investigation, I will not confuse them with other people's theories. The one I have quoted, however, caused us considerable trouble, and suggested a train of thought that was used very effectively by one of the bandits when he was convicted of murder in the first degree. For that reason, I want you to remember it and dovetail it when the time comes.

A reward of \$22,000 was offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the murderers, and by the time we reached the District Attorney's office, the county was swarming with amateur detectives. I will disclose the facts as they came to us, and let the readers pick out their own suspects.

When Fogarty and I reached the District



Detective De Martini, the co-author of this amazing story

**By Detective FELIX DE MARTINI
As Told to ISABEL STEPHEN**

Attorney's office, we found all the chairs in the reception hall filled with tremendously excited citizens, who, however, were cautiously silent. Each one, we figured, felt confident that he or she possessed some bit of information that might yield a slice of the reward.

District Attorney Weeks was seated at his large, plate-glass covered mahogany desk when we entered his private office.

"You probably know the history of the stickup," he remarked, after the customary greetings had been passed. His eyes rested on a newspaper that stuck out of my pocket.

"Yes—and the theories," I replied, grinning.

"The reporters stuck pretty close to facts," he returned thoughtfully, "and they obligingly suppressed some theories that would have made the story much more startling."

The stickup had occurred in midday, between 12:20 and 12:30, when only Miss Mary Umhauer, Assistant Cashier, was in the front part of the bank. A bookkeeper, the only other employee on the premises, had been in the directors' room.

"Here," the District Attorney said, handing me a sheet of legal paper, "is the girl's statement. It covers the actual robbery pretty thoroughly."

While he was attending to a telephone call which came in at that moment, Jack and I glanced over the following:

"About twenty minutes after twelve, two men entered the bank. They were strangers. I have worked here for five years and know most of the people in the neighborhood. One was slightly taller and slimmer than the other. He came up to my window and asked me to change a ten-dollar bill. His companion walked toward the back of the bank. There is no need for anybody going to the back of the bank, unless they have special business, so I kept my eye on him. When he bumped against the door leading to the directors' room, I got suspicious and decided to sound the burglar alarm. This is low down, just above the rail. My foot was seeking the button when the man standing at the other side of the window said, very softly but firmly:

"Don't put your foot on anything, girlie. Step back. If you don't, I'll shoot."

"And the next instant I found myself looking into the muzzle of a big black revolver. The other man jumped over into the enclosure and appeared alongside of me. He took hold of my sleeve and led me back to a chair. He told me not to make any noise or I would be shot. The second man had a canvas bag and started to dump into it the money that lay on the counter—practically seven thousand dollars. A large

sum of Federal Reserve money had arrived somewhat ahead of its scheduled time, and I had put it in the vault—otherwise it would probably have been lying there.

"Then I saw a third man walk in and he also had a gun in his hand. That left one man at the window and two inside. The two men looked around. They saw the door closed into the directors' room, and the two men with their guns drawn walked in there.

"The man taking the money said to me, 'Don't be nervous, girlie. You'll be all right, if you are quiet and mind your own business.'

"I saw the shadows of more men walking in the bank. What was going on in the street I could not tell, as the windows are opaque half way up. The bookkeeper was brought out and they had him stand behind me. And then all the men that were in the working space—I think they were four—walked into the cage. They had a white bag with them. They opened the two money drawers on each side and took all the money out and put it in this bag. When they had this money they walked out and glanced around and one man said, 'What'll we do with the dogs?' Another said, 'We'll put the dogs down in the cellar.' Then he stepped away from the others and came over near me and he said, 'Go on, down there,' and he pointed to the cellar stairs.

"When we neared the lower steps, I heard a shot which was followed by four more shots in succession. We tried to escape by the back door; but it was locked, and the window, through which I had often seen the janitor's boy come out, was covered by a grating too tight to move.

"We returned upstairs and found the bank empty, but for a body lying on the floor. I saw the man was dying. He was dead before I reached his side."

Miss Umhauer's description of the robbers was rather vague. The man who had asked for change for the ten-dollar bill, she said, was slightly taller than herself, her height being five feet six. "He appeared to be dark with very steady piercing eyes. He wore a soft hat that was pulled down across his forehead. The man who went in back was heavier built and had a fair complexion and was a little shorter than the other."

Not much was obtained from Rudolph Kowalki, the bookkeeper, who had perhaps been too frightened to pay any attention to the appearance of the bandits. He was, according to his story, "looking more at the gun than the man"; which, after all, was natural enough.



The First National Bank of Bellmore, Long Island, New York, where murdering bandits made a bold noon-time raid, and made their getaway with several thousand dollars in cash after shooting down an innocent bystander



Entrance to the swanky Newbridge Inn on Long Island, where Detective De Martini uncovered information destined to have far-reaching results

When the officers first appeared on the scene they obtained much valuable information from people in the neighborhood; for villagers have far keener powers of observation than those who live in the city. Their senses are not blunted by the ceaseless pandemonium of traffic, the roar of the elevated, the congestion of irritable pedestrians, the constant honking of automobile sirens, the clanging of police patrol wagons and ambulances, which all combine to make of the metropolitan eye-witness a distracted individual who may look, but absorbs little of what is going on about him.

"An automobile salesman, Harold F. Mackin," the District Attorney said, interrupting our perusal of various statements he had been handing us as he continued to talk over the phone, "had the presence of mind to write down the number of the bandits' car—a seven-passenger blue Buick sedan, 1924 model, 1030617, New York. Others had attempted to do this, but Mackin proved to be correct."

"As a result of the alarm sent out for this car it was reported found in Hicksville opposite a private garage belonging to Judge Steinert, by a girl named Marjorie Kunz. The bandits had some trouble in starting their car and in order to scare off pursuers they fired through the back window with a rifle, smashing the glass."

We discussed the crime at length with the District Attorney and jotted down the names and addresses of all eye-witnesses who had seen the murder car both before and after the robbery.

"By the bye," he said as we rose to leave, "the cashier, a man named Charles M. Vanderoef, will bear a little looking into. The men who questioned him report that he seemed very indifferent about the robbery, but was worried about something else. Besides he claims he was at Lynbrook at twelve-thirty when the traffic cop told him about the stick-up. Special Patrolman Jesse G. Robinson told detectives that he was the only traffic officer on duty yesterday. He says he did not see Vanderoef and does not know him."

"What sort of reputation has the cashier?" I asked.

"Naturally, he is regarded very highly," the District Attorney said thoughtfully, "otherwise he would not be cashier

in a National Bank, the most conservative of all institutions. Had his attitude been different, there would not have been a breath of suspicion against him. It was a reporter on one of the papers who started to dig around when Vanderoef appeared to treat the stickup rather flippantly. He found out that the cashier has been living a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde life. During business hours he has been the acme of respectability and responsibility; at night he has been playing around the Broadway jazz places and swank Long Island roadhouses. He has a fine home in North Bellmore, but gossiping has it that he has been neglecting his family."

After a long conference it was planned that Fogarty should start in running down the endless "tips" that had accumulated ever since the news of the robbery had gotten out—scout around the roadhouses, and investigate leads given by the New York Police Department in regard to certain auto thieves. I was instructed to dig right into the lead of the getaway car.

My first act was to go carefully over the Buick, which, by that time had been towed into a Mineola garage.

The license number carried at the time of the murder had been issued to a man named Julius Presses for a Ford sedan which, according to the Automobile Squad at Police Headquarters, had been stolen from in front of its owner's residence on March 31st. Through the motor number on the Buick, the car's ownership had been traced to a Mrs. Julius Smallwood of 317 Madison Avenue, a woman of means and considerable social position.



Newbridge Road and Motor Parkway, where killers, eluding police, climbed up the bank near this bridge and escaped in a waiting automobile

Crooks have a little trick of changing tires on stolen cars, so in jotting down the motor number, the body number and the generator number, I also made a note of the fact that the two front tires were plain Ajax cord and the two rear, Diamond cord. The mileage was 6,438. This information I telephoned into our office, instructing a man to call at the Smallwood home, verify these items, and find out all details of the theft. If the tires had been changed, this might afford us a clue.

I INSTRUCTED another operative to interview Julius Presses, owner of the license plate found on the bandit car.

The amateur detective story reader may wonder why I didn't go myself to investigate the owners of the stolen autos, figuring that in them I would find my best clue. Hundreds of thousands of cars are stolen every year, obviously by "joy-riders" as is indicated by statistics, which show that between eighty and ninety per cent are recovered very shortly in a battered condition. We assumed that we had the getaway car. What I wanted to do was to find the men who had been in that machine.

With an open mind and disregarding all I had been told, I set out to call on the eye-witnesses.

That's not quite accurate—I didn't disregard what I had been told concerning the cashier. Suspicion without solid foundation doesn't get an investigator far, but I decided to leave Vanderoef alone for awhile. The whole countryside was seething with excitement over the robbery and murder; if the cashier had had any hand in the planning of the crime, this postponement would work like yeast in his guilty conscience.

I started my trail at the home of a bright young Italian barber, Joseph Massene, who lived on Bedford Avenue, Bellmore, about two blocks away from the bank.

Massene told us that he was in the kitchen of his house waiting for his wife to put dinner on the table when he saw a Buick stop a few feet away from his door just before the robbery and murder.

Two days previous, that is, the day before the robbery, he had noticed the same car. At that time he was overseeing the work of a plumber who was connecting the water main to his home. The car stopped beside him and a man who was seated alongside the driver asked Massene if they were in Bellmore. On receiving a reply in the affirmative, the stranger asked: "Where is the Bank of Bellmore?" And with considerable sardonic satisfaction he stated how he had told the city slickers to follow their noses right in front of them.

"I showed him where the bank was," he continued with a grin. "I only spoke to the fellow seated in front, but there were others in the rear seats. It was a brand new sedan,

either green or very nervous. Then, in a little while, he got it into gear and he let the clutch in quickly and swung the rear wheels and drove off in the direction of the railroad tracks, and the bank at the other side of the tracks, I presume."

Though there were only three or four feet between Mr. Dean and the driver, he did not see the man's face as his cap was pulled down. One of the passengers, who stepped out of the car had, he said, a squarish face with a large nose.

Crossing the tracks, we saw the First National Bank of Bellmore. It is a one-story white brick building and stands diagonal with the street, on the corner of Bedford and Grand Avenues. Being Saturday afternoon it was closed, and we made a few inquiries among the merchants in the neighborhood. So craftily, however, had the holdup been staged, that no one paid any attention to the Buick, which parked for a couple of minutes on Grand Avenue near the bank's door until the shooting started.

I located Harold Mackin, who had been keen-witted enough to note the correct license number on the Buick. I found him at his home on Cedar Street, Freeport. He was the regular go-getter type, nattily dressed and debonair, but somewhat nervous in his rôle of star spectator of an affray in which desperate gunmen were involved.

I REASSURED him that any information he turned over to me would be kept confidential, and after some persuasive talk on my part he gave me his version of the getaway.

"I was," he said, "driving down Pettit Place in my Reo car, headed toward Grand Avenue, when I noticed a seven-passenger blue Buick sedan standing about seven feet from the curb near the Bellmore Bank. At the same moment I heard a noise that sounded like back fire and saw a man coming down the steps of the bank. He was a short, heavy-set man, in a brownish-colored suit. He had no hat on. He was stuffing something into his right-hand pocket. He had no overcoat on and was about five feet five, grayish hair and a full squarish face and a large nose. He ran around the back of the car to get into the rear left-hand door. That had been held open for him by a man on the right auxiliary seat. As he came along, he sort of stumbled and pulled a cap on over his forehead. When he tried to get in the auto he stumbled again, and the others seemed to help drag him in. The door closed just as I shot by in my Reo."

Mackin paused, either because in the rapid rush of words his breath had given out, or in order (*Continued on page 78*)



Judge Joseph Steinert, who presided over Long Island City Court for many years, points to spot outside his garage where the bandit car was abandoned

seven passenger, with a blue body and a black top. I looked after them and saw they didn't stop at the bank, but turned on the right-hand side over to Grand Avenue. Yesterday the car stopped between the fire plug and the Dean and Seaman Lumber Yard. Three men got out and walked toward the bank, and the car, after a couple of minutes, followed them on Bedford Avenue. Then I went and had my dinner."

We located Mr. Dean and he told us why he specially noticed the Buick.

He is a tall, dignified, middle-aged gentleman, and although chagrined at having been brought into such close contact with crime, he was ready to do his civic duty and told us all he knew.

"I am," he said, "accustomed to having a number of salesmen drop around at that hour and expected those men to come in to see me, but they went on toward the railroad tracks. The car remained there a minute or so, and then moved slowly in the same direction. What kept my attention on this machine was that the driver seemed to be having trouble trying to shift into first speed, I imagined—it either did not go in or he could not get it in, because he kept pulling back and forth on the lever. He was, I thought to myself,



Farm belonging to Mrs. Joseph Bergold. Here a mysterious stranger named "Jack" stopped to telephone on the afternoon of the bank robbery

TRAPPING THE SLAYER OF THE

Blonde

A WASHINGTON DETECTIVE

IN Washington, D. C., in the early hours of a March morning, a ruthless crime was committed. The criminal might have gone free—the case might have gone unsolved—had it not been for certain scientific tests originally developed in the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These tests proved the guilt of a murderer, and also proved that the infallibility of scientific crime detection methods cannot be too strongly stressed. This case was one of the most outstanding examples in my experience, of science coming to the aid of justice.

Twenty-two-year-old Mrs. Blanche Landis, blonde and lovely, stood before her mirror and applied final touches of makeup. With her was her best friend, Emily Scroggs. The two girls had been chums since school days. Emily was giving Blanche some advice.

"I'm glad to see you happy again," she said, "but somehow I'm worried about you. You've been so blue and discouraged since you and Jimmy parted, and now you're carefree as a little girl again. What's come over you?"

Blanche laughed as she reached for a blue satin gown and slipped it over her head. "I'm happy because I'm stepping out tonight," she said. "Stepping out for the first time in a

long while. No more moping around my room and crying." Emily, picking up her hat and gloves, walked to the door. "Hope you have a good time," she said.

After Emily left, Blanche pulled a chair before the window of her room—on the second floor of a lodging house at 1014 Monroe Street, Northeast, in Washington, D. C.—and sat gazing out into the early spring night. It was ten-thirty, March 23rd, 1938.

She read for a time from a booklet entitled *Advice for Young Mothers*. Her doctor had told Blanche that afternoon that she would become a mother late in the summer, and had given her literature concerning diet, exercise and general care.

Two hours passed as she sat there, frequently looking out of the window with anxiety. She had expected a caller at eleven, and she debated with herself whether she should go to bed or make an inquiring telephone call about the reason for the delay.

There came the sound of an automobile outside. A sedan pulled up across the street and the driver honked the horn four times. Blanche waved out of the window, snatched up her coat and hurried downstairs. She crossed the street, entered the car and was driven away.

(Below) Scene of tragedy. At this spot (circle), on a lonely Washington road, a mortally wounded girl was discovered by the driver of the truck pictured here

Detective Sergeant Robert J. Barrett (circle), co-author. Though faced with a difficult crime problem, he and his colleagues succeeded in reaching the amazing solution



Beauty

CLASSIC

Detective Sergeant William Liverman, my partner, and I were cruising in our patrol car at three-thirty that morning—March 24th—when a radio broadcast was made to squads in the area. The announcer at Headquarters droned:

"Go to Twenty-fourth and Taylor Streets. An injured woman lying in the street. May have been hit by an auto."

The instructions were repeated three times. The announcer then asked Casualty Hospital to send an ambulance to the scene. Bill and I were on our way before he finished talking. "A petten park in that neighborhood," my partner remarked. "Maybe some girl got hit by a car while walking home."

I mentioned the fact that Corinne Loring, an attractive young woman, had been found murdered in the

"It was another man—two men," murmured the young victim, Mrs. Blanche Landis (right), when, as she lay dying, she was questioned



By Detective Sergeant
**ROBERT J.
BARRETT**

**Metropolitan Police
Washington, D. C.
AS TOLD TO RAYMOND RUDDY**



(Top) Standing anxiously outside the District of Columbia Morgue, during the inquest into the death of Blanche Landis, a crowd awaits the verdict.

"Blanche, this is Jimmy. Don't you know me?" pleaded James Landis (above), as he strove to gain recognition from his critically injured young wife

section eighteen months earlier, two days after vanishing on the eve of her wedding. The killer never had been apprehended.

We pulled up at Twenty-fourth and Taylor, and turned the spotlight down Taylor. The circle of light picked up a man in white coveralls. He waved, ran toward us and jumped on the running-board of the cruiser. He was a milk delivery driver for the Chevy Chase Dairy Farms.

"She's lying down the street about a block," the milkman said. His face was white and his voice trembled. "I think she's dying."

We drove in the direction he designated. It was a rough, gravel roadway. There was an embankment about twenty feet high at our right and a stretch of rough prairie to the left. It was a lonely spot; not a house within three blocks. The milkman's truck was parked beside the roadway. We pulled up behind it and, as I turned the light to the left, we saw the crumpled figure of a woman lying on the gravel.

She was resting on her back. Though her face was battered, we could see she was young and attractive. She was still breathing. "I'm sick," she said feebly. "So awfully sick." Then she seemed to lose consciousness.

The Casualty ambulance and two police cars pulled up. We put the girl on a stretcher and lifted her into the ambulance. An intern then looked at her wounds, and Bill asked if she was seriously hurt.

"Her skull seems to be crushed," the intern said. "I don't believe she can live."

The ambulance clanged away, with Private Otho L. Blackwell, one of the precinct officers, riding on the tailgate. Bill and I asked a few questions of the milkman. He was Thomas Boss, aged thirty, of 2422 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest. He had spotted the girl while making his rounds and had telephoned Headquarters from the home of Mrs. H. S. Fowler, on Taylor Street.

"There's a woman's purse lying down the street," Boss said. "It must belong to the girl."

We got the purse, a blue leather one. In it were some keys, a lipstick, handkerchief and vanity case; but no money—and no letters or other papers to identify her.

Daylight was beginning to break. A few more policemen and two newspaper reporters arrived. One of the reporters was George Waters, of the Washington *Herald* and *Times*. He had stopped off at the hospital on the way out, and he informed us that the girl was believed to be dying.

"What happened?" Waters asked. "Was she hit by a car?"

Liverman and I replied that it did not look like a hit-and-run case. There were no marks on the gravel such as would have been made by a body struck by an auto. It was highly

unlikely, for the same reason, that she had fallen or been thrown from a moving car.

Waters dashed for his automobile. "Then it looks like a murder case!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to call my office."

We searched the roadway thoroughly and found a pair of women's shoes, tan and cut out across the toes, about twenty feet from where the girl had lain. The buckles were unfastened.

"She must have been riding in a car with her shoes unbuckled," Bill said, "and the shoes fell off after she left the machine."

Near by was the butt of a cigarette, cork-tipped. There was lipstick on it. I wrapped the butt in my handkerchief and kept it. On the gravel were several dark red stains. Near one of these was a jagged stone about the size of a man's fist. On it were stains and blonde hairs.

"She was evidently struck with this," said Bill, picking up the stone. I agreed.

There was only one other thing at the scene that could be regarded as evidence. It was a man's sock, of white cotton, knotted with string at the open end, and filled with sand to form a crude blackjack. There were dark stains on it.

A police photographer arrived. The rest of us left. Bill and I took the purse, shoes, cigarette butt and sand-packed sock with us.

"The sock is our best bet," Bill remarked. "If we find the owner, we'll have the guilty person."

WE drove to Casualty Hospital. Officer Blackwell was standing outside the door of a second-floor operating room. He shook his head when we asked if the victim had given her name.

"No, and there are no papers in her clothing to identify her," Blackwell said.

He handed me two rings from the girl's fingers. One was a graduation ring for the Class of 1936, from McKinley High School in Washington. The other was a plain gold wedding ring. I peered inside the wedding band and made out a faint inscription of what appeared to be the name of "Landis." That didn't help much, as there are many Landis families in Greater Washington.

Sergeant Liverman was examining the blue purse, meanwhile. He gave an exclamation of astonishment and pulled out a tiny notebook that had been concealed in a hidden pocket. In the notebook was just one name—that of "James Landis, D. C. F. D."

We concluded the letters meant District of Columbia Fire Department, so I called fire headquarters. There was no listing of a fireman named Landis, but the man on the switchboard promised to check all stations. He called me back at the hospital in a few minutes.

"I can't locate any fireman named Landis," he reported, "but James Beckert, of Engine Company No. 19, says his daughter is married to a James Landis."

I got Beckert on the telephone and described the wounded girl, her clothing and rings. He immediately recognized her as his daughter, Blanche, and said that he would pick up his wife at their home and come to the hospital at once.

Dr. Ross Jung and Dr. James W. Braden completed their work in the operating room and emerged. The girl, unconscious and pale as death, was wheeled to a room. I asked the doctors what chance she had of surviving.

"We could do nothing for her except to bandage her wounds," Dr.



(Above) James Landis was employed on this fireboat on the fatal spring night when his wife was lured to a rendezvous with Death

Virginia Lee Simpson (right), comely young Southern girl, innocently involved in the puzzling case, she gave valuable aid to the police



Braden said. "Her life cannot be saved," he added. Dr. Jung detailed the girl's injuries, which included a fractured left arm and bruises on the throat in addition to the head wounds.

Liverman displayed the stone we had found at the scene. Both doctors agreed that it undoubtedly was the death weapon, saying that its edge was exactly the same shape as a wound in the victim's head.

A telephone call came for me at that point. The caller was Private James Landis, a rookie fireman stationed at the fireboat in the Potomac Tidewater Basin, near the District Morgue on Water Street. He had only recently joined the force and was not yet listed at headquarters, which explained the difficulty in reaching him.

"That's my wife, Blanche," Landis said quickly, as I began describing the victim.

I asked him to come to the hospital, and there was a moment of hesitation. "I'll come if she's badly hurt and if you need me," he replied, "but I'd rather not. Blanche and I are estranged, you see."

I said it was urgent, and he promised to start for the hospital immediately.

Fireman and Mrs. Beckert arrived, looked at the still form on the hospital cot, and identified her positively as their daughter. Mrs. Beckert appeared to be about to collapse from grief, and tears flowed down the father's leathery, wrinkled cheeks.

As the girl's parents left the room, they came face to face in the hall with a tall, dark young man clad in the blue coat and trousers of a fireman. They walked past him in stony silence, although he bowed to them.

The youth was a fine looking, stalwart fellow of about twenty-five. I scrutinized him closely, and he gazed back with apparent forthright honesty. He introduced himself as James Landis and I took him into Blanche's room. Standing beside the bed, hat in hand, he looked down at her. No emotion showed in his face, but he was not the type to display his grief.

"That's Blanche, all right," he said.

Sergeant Liverman urged Landis to speak to his wife, and he complied. "Blanche, this is Jimmy. This is your husband, Jimmy. Don't you know me?" But she gave no sign of hearing him.

Landis knew the location of the lodging house where the girl had been living, and readily agreed to accompany us there. On the way he gave us a full statement, holding back nothing about his life with Blanche. He stated that they had been married in November, 1936, four months after she was graduated from high school.

"My wife's parents never liked me," he said. "They didn't want Blanche to marry so young. You probably noticed that they wouldn't speak to me at the hotel tonight."

"Mr. Beckert disliked me so much that Blanche and I didn't tell him when I got on the Fire Department. We were afraid he would cause trouble for me on the force."

He and Blanche had been separated for about six months, Landis said. He blamed interference from her parents for the estrangement, adding that he and Blanche had hoped to leave Washington and begin life anew in another city. He had been paying her \$45 a month for her support, and she had a part-time job in a department store.

At 2014 Monroe Street, we pounded on the door until the proprietress of the lodging house, Mrs. Elvira Blue, awakened. It now was five A. M. Mrs. Blue took us to Blanche's room and we looked through her possessions carefully. There were no letters. The booklet on *Advice for Young Mothers* was in a bureau drawer, but we thought

nothing of it at the time. Any married woman might have such literature, regardless of whether she was an expectant mother.

Mrs. Blue had heard the automobile horn honk across the street some hours earlier, although she did not know the exact time, and had heard Blanche leave the house. There was no money in the room. Mrs. Blue inquired if any cash had been found in the girl's purse, and we replied in the negative.

"Then she must have been robbed," the landlady remarked. "She paid her rent to me last night and I saw a roll of bills in her hands. She had \$30 or \$40. I noticed that she had a torn twenty, which had been patched with adhesive paper, and some other bills."

From the lodging house we went to No. 12 Precinct Station. Landis drove his car and I rode with him. Bill Liverman drove our squad car.

As we rode along, Landis opened the glove compartment in the dash, took out a half-empty package of cigarettes and lighted one. I noticed the cigarettes were cork-tipped, and of the same brand as the butt found at the crime scene.

"Does your wife smoke?" I asked. Landis puffed away and replied, "Yes, same brand I do. She got the habit after we were married."

AT NO. 12 we were joined by Sergeant George Thornton and Detective James Ennis. In order to leave no ground unturned, we asked Landis to describe his movements of the night. He gave a straightforward answer.

"I went on duty at the fireboat at seven o'clock, and was on watch until one," he said. "At that time I awakened Fireman Dewey Neil, who relieved me. I then went to my bunk and turned in, intending to sleep until eight A. M., when my shift would be finished. I slept for several hours and was awakened by a nightmare."

"I went to the fire house kitchen and made myself some coffee. It was then about four in the morning. Fireman Neil came in while I was there."

Landis said he took a walk back and forth in front of the fire house after that, and in a short time a telephone call came for him from the headquarters switchboard. He then called me at the hospital.

We asked the young fireman if he knew of any man with whom his wife might have been keeping company, but he did not. He had seen her last on Sunday evening, when he visited her in her room. It was now Thursday morning.

Mrs. Landis' purse, the sock-bludgeon and the stone had been dusted for fingerprints by experts, in the meantime. There were no prints.

I asked Landis to remain at the station house for a time, mentioning that it was my duty to check at the fireboat on his story. He asked me to take him along. "I'm only half dressed," he explained. "I didn't even put my socks on before leaving the station."

I replied, however, that it would be better for him to remain at No. 12.

Outside the station I looked in Landis' auto. Under the glare of my flashlight I could see spots that appeared to be oil on the mohair cushions. There were similar stains on the left running-board and fender.

In the tonneau I found a .45 caliber revolver, and a policeman's nightstick. There was nothing alarming about the weapons, as many men carry such things for protection from robbers, and a fireman is given a certain latitude in carrying arms. There were no bloodstains on either weapon.

At the fireboat I found that Landis' statement checked perfectly. Several firemen confirmed his story in part, and (*Continued on page 61*)



Inspector Bernard J. Thompson (above) directed the inquiry into the fatal wounding of Mrs. Blanche Landis, and took an active part throughout the case

unmasking a modern borgia

the strange story of martha marek

MRS. TROPPER'S keen eyes gazed through the bars of a fence surrounding the flower-scented garden of 110 Bruehler Street, Moedling, Greater Vienna.

She was returning from market that balmy morning of June 12th, 1925. Carrying a well filled bag in her right hand she rested for a moment, holding on to the fence with her left.

She noticed a tall man, his attractive face framed by a fully grown beard, chopping on a large wooden block. She could clearly see the sharp blade of an axe flash in the strong sunlight. Between hedges she perceived a moving splotch of white—a woman clad in summer attire, it seemed.

Turning, and walking on, Mrs. Tropper could still hear the rhythmic beat of the axe hitting the wood. Then, suddenly, she heard a crash, accompanied by a muffled moan and a heavy thud—followed by a woman's scream.

The witness of what at first glance appeared to be an accident, whirled around. She saw the man lying on the ground, the wooden block toppled over his left foot.

The appearance of the injured, suffering man, the sound of the woman's cries, were too much for Mrs. Tropper's ailing heart—she fainted.

* * *

General-Manager Korn, of the Anglo-Danubian Lloyd Insurance Company, picked up his telephone. "Korn speaking."

by gabriel galt



An early picture of the blonde and beautiful Martha Marek, whose attractive femininity masked the scheming mind of a modern Borgia. Compare this photo with that on page 21, taken after years of crime had left their indelible mark.

The voice of Vice-President Moeller came over the wire. "I just received a telegram from Mrs. Marek. May I read it to you?"

"Certainly," Korn wondered what it was all about. His company, the biggest in the Austrian insurance business, located in a sumptuous office building on Vienna's Stephans Square, received telegrams and cables every hour of the day.

Moeller read aloud: "Husband in grave accident. Call at once, hospital, Moedling. Martha Marek."

The general manager raised his eyebrows.

"That's a strange coincidence, Moeller. Why, today's June 13th. If I'm not mistaken it was only two days ago that Marek received his policy. You'd better come here at once."

A few minutes later the far-flung machinery of the company's vast organization started sifting the case of Emil Marek, of 110 Bruehler Street, Moedling, Greater Vienna.

Studying the data of the Marek file were Korn, Moeller and Divisions Manager Swoboda.

Marek had stated that he was an academic engineer, mine owner, inventor, and manager of a projected power plant. Insurance agent, Kresky, had drawn up the policy. It appeared from the documents on file that Marek had first applied for a guaranty insurance of purely economic nature. On April 25th, 1925, he had changed his mind and filed another policy for life and accident insurance. On May 25th, the second form was approved, and on June 11th—only two days previous—the policy was in Marek's hands.

ATTEMPTS to defraud insurance companies are frequent. What made this particular one immediately outstanding was the extraordinary amount of money for which Marek had insured his health—\$400,000! The fact that it actually had been this sum of money was authenticated by the records.

In the course of their investigation, Moeller and Swoboda, ace insurance experts, temporarily became sleuths. Upon their arrival at the Moedling Municipal Hospital they briefly conversed with Dr. Rudolf Kuester, Chief Surgeon, before visiting Marek. They learned from Kuester that Marek had been brought to the hospital at 11:45 the previous day. He was accompanied by Commandant Meier, of the Moedling First Aid Society, Mr. Doorzak, of the voluntary fire patrol, and his wife, Martha. According to the last named her husband had been working in his workshop when he left his leg while working with an axe. The accident had occurred in the back yard of his house—immediate amputation of the limb had been necessary.

"Would you call it an accident, Doctor?" the investigators inquired.

"Sorry, gentlemen," replied Kuester, "but as Mr. Marek's physician I'm not permitted to voice any opinion in that direction."

Proceeding now to the sick room, Moeller and Swoboda found Marek calmly smoking a cigarette, his wife by his bedside.

The Mareks were a strikingly good-looking couple. The man was of distinguished mien, his now extremely pale face framed by a well-groomed beard. Martha Marek was a beautiful woman, her delicate features illuminated by a crown of rich blonde hair.

Again the two sleuths made it a point to be casual and brief. Remaining cool toward Martha's efforts to dramatize the situation, Swoboda and his companion assured her that the business end of the deplorable accident would be settled speedily.

"I don't even know whether we've received our policy yet," she said.

"You certainly have, Madame," Moeller replied. "I signed the letter three days ago. The policy was in your hands on June 11th. It probably came with the late afternoon mail."

Marek said from his sick-bed: "Gentlemen, I'm not concerned with that part. No amount of money can restore my lost limb. I have accepted the rest of my life."

If the man was putting on an act, the insurance men decided, he was playing his part to perfection. He appeared bitter, despairing about his future. Not at all concerned about monetary remuneration.

After the hospital had been visited, investigation was extended to the Marek home, including questioning of relatives and possible eye-witnesses. It was there that the first clues of importance were obtained.

The Marek home was of better than middle-class stand-



ards. The lot on which it was built was cut into a right angle by Bruehler and Promenaden Streets. The angle's point faced the tree-shaded lawn of King's Meadows.

Mrs. Loewenstein, Marek's mother-in-law, her daughter, Paula, and Franziska Novotny, caretaker, were eager to supply the investigators with a dramatic account of the accident.

"Paula, Paula and I were in the kitchen," old Mrs. Loewenstein stated. "Emily was busy in the yard, working with an axe on a block of wood."

Swoboda wanted to see the evidence. He and Moeller were led to a large piece of wood about the height of a man. "My brother-in-law wants to make a robot out of this," Paula explained. "It will function like a human being once it is completed."

Moeller studied the strange object closely. It was evident that attempts had been made to hew from the block a human figure. The surface of the wood was dusty and brown, to fresh cuts and jagged points. "We won't get anywhere this way," he said pointedly.

The three women grew confused. Reluctantly they admitted that they must have shown him the wrong block. Producing two smaller wooden blocks they now claimed these as the ones on which Marek had been working.

The investigators believed them. One of the blocks, about five feet high, showed traces of recent cuts. A few bloodstains were also visible.

Taking a seat, Moeller placed himself before the block and swung the implement in the same manner Marek must have done it. Swinging the axe with his right hand it appeared to be impossible to smash his left leg below the knee—it was virtually shielded by the block itself.

Exchanging a glance with Swoboda, Moeller laid down the axe.

"After Mr. Marek had hurt himself so terribly he certainly

in the yard. I remember that Martha sang the couplet of *Handsome Menelaus* from the operetta *Beautiful Helena*. All the time I could hear my son-in-law working on that unfortunate wood-block."

"Suddenly there was a crash, followed by a moan. 'Mother,' Martha screamed, 'look at my leg! It's cut off!' We ran outside. We found him lying on the ground, the wooden block on his left foot. My daughter Paula rushed out into the street. She found Mr. Doorzak, who tried to get some first-aid bandages in the fire station. They were not prepared for such an emergency, however; he came back and just washed the wound and tied up the leg so Emil wouldn't bleed to death."

Moeller and Swoboda made short notes and left. Outside they looked at each other and smiled. [Two many people would like to sell a foot or a hand for \$400,000!]

The investigators went to the post office and questioned the letter carrier who had delivered the envelope containing the policy.

His testimony came as a shock. "I gave the letter to Mrs. Marek in person," the postal employee declared. "And I remember that she put it into the drawer of the hall mirror. This happened while I was going through my sack. She asked me to. She thought there should be more mail for them."

* * *

Twenty-four hours later Swoboda returned to the Moedling Hospital. He was accompanied by Dr. Werkgartner, of the Vienna Medical Institute. They demanded that Marek's amputated limb be turned over to them at once.

In the absence of Chief Surgeon Kuester, Swoboda talked to Dr. Adolph Fries and Dr. Pauli.

"My company insists that the nature of the wound should be determined in the Vienna Medical Institute," he explained. "As a doctor you'll agree with me that there's no other way for us to find out whether your patient has cut himself accidentally or on purpose."

Dr. Fries promised to forward the leg to the Vienna Rudolf Hospital, seat of the Medical Institute, as soon as he was authorized to do so.

Another day went by. Then J. Mraz, employed at the Moedling Hospital, arrived with the evidence at the Vienna Medical Institute.

No lesser authority than Professor Meixner, renowned surgeon, examined the severed limb. Professor Meixner, who had treated countless victims of all kinds of accidents, came to the conviction that Marek's leg had not been severed accidentally. He backed up his theory by proving the existence of five separate incisions, one large and four small—one way.

How a human being could have endured an experience like this, fully conscious and naturally with his consent, remained a mystery, baffling medical as well as insurance men.

A few moments, during which the women tried to locate both trousers and sock, went by.

"Sorry, we can't find them," Paula Loewenstein spoke for the others. "You realize in what state of mind we still are—maybe we'll be able to get them for you later."

Four days after the findings of the medical authorities, J. Mraz, orderly at the Moedling Hospital, received a strange message. He found a note slipped under the door of his apartment. It read:

Bruehler Strasse 110



In Vienna (above) lived the principal characters in this story. Here the golden-haired wife and mother pinned and carried out her evil plans of murder

Martha Marek's young husband, Emil, pictured during his service in the Austrian Army. One of the perpetrators of a \$400,000 insurance swindle, he finally fell victim to the woman he trusted

must have been bleeding profusely. Would you mind showing us the trousers and the sock of his left foot?"

A few moments, during which the women tried to locate both trousers and sock, went by.

"Sorry, we can't find them," Paula Loewenstein spoke for the others. "You realize in what state of mind we still are—maybe we'll be able to get them for you later."

SWOBODA lighted a cigarette. "Now, Mrs. Loewenstein, would you mind continuing your story of the accident?" Always corroborated by her daughter and the caretaker the old lady complied.

"As I said before, gentlemen, we were in the kitchen. My daughter, Martha, was with us. Emil was working outside

Master Detective

"Did you notice anybody come near our door?" he asked his wife.

Mrs. Mraz had not, and she was a little frightened.

An hour later Mraz found himself in the living-room of the Marek home, for this was 110 Bruecher Street. Soon Martha Marek entered, welcomed him charmingly, and offered him a drink and cigars.

"My dear Mr. Mraz," she said, coming to the point with our wavy hair. "Don't you think my poor husband has got a new deal? Isn't it possible that the insurance company bribed the hospital staff so that they'd add four weeks to the one my husband caused himself? Don't you think they've tampered with the amputated leg?"

Mraz hesitated. "After all, Mrs. Marek, I'm only an ordinary—"

Marek's wife pressed her point. "If you, Mr. Mraz, would come forward and testify that you saw Dr. Fries and Dr. Paul do something to the leg while it was in the dissection room—maybe heard them say something to the effect that Mr. Marek wouldn't get his amputation—they'd do a great favor!"

She added significantly, "Could you use 10,000 schillings, Mr. Mraz?"

Mraz nodded silently. He could use that much money.

So brazen was the Mareks' attempt to dupe the law and so gross their charges against the staff of Moedling Hospital, that they were arrested. Both the Mr. and Mrs. Marek, Marek's mother-in-law and her daughter, Paula, were also taken into custody. The charges were attempted fraud, slander, conspiring to perjury, and obstructing the law.

PREPARATIONS of the case of the people of Austria versus Marek and accomplices, rested with the Moedling official District Attorney, Bommer. Shortly after the trial began, preliminary investigations Bommer received an unsigned letter hurling forth a terrible charge against Martha Marek. It read as follows:

Sir:
The voice of my conscience won't give me rest or peace until I've unb burdened myself. I must give you information of paramount importance—
Mrs. Marek and her mother, Mrs. Lowenstein, have been lying!

Here's the truth. Mrs. Marek herself has cut off her husband's leg, and it was I who supplied syringe and morphine to the injured man. Marek's leg previous to the operation. The point on which the needle was to be introduced was marked with indelible pencil.

If immunity could be granted to me I shall be ready to testify in court. I received two hundred schillings for my services.

This fantastic document later proved nothing but a hoax perpetrated by a publicity mad individual. Nevertheless it appeared during the Marek trial of April, 1927, as if a skeptical court were not quite so sure that Martha had not actually performed or at least aided in the act of her husband's self-mutilation.

The trial, heralded by the press as one of Europe's most sensational affairs, was merely the beginning of a saga of crime and death.

During the trial, which in the true humanitarian spirit of Old Austria, ended with a general acquittal, Martha Marek's past was brought to light. From it arose the grim picture of a lovely child, early grown into womanhood and cruelly abused.

Unmasking a Modern Borgia

Born in 1897 in Vienna, her father deserted the family when Martha was eight. The last heard of the former station-master of the Austrian Southern Railroad was that he had arrived in the United States and gone to Milwaukee.

When twelve Martha was a golden-haired beauty. One day 66-year-old Moritz Fritsch, wealthy Vienna businessman, noticed the child in a street car, followed her to her home and persuaded Mrs. Lowenstein to entrust him her daughter. A month later Martha began a life of travel into far away countries, of luxury and ease.

As time wore on there were repeated violent scenes between the young girl and Fritsch's divorced wife, Betty, proprietress of a popular café in midtown Vienna. It was the same Betty Fritsch who, after her husband's death, charged Martha with having had him poisoned. Dr. Pollack, however, Fritsch's personal physician, ridiculed the charge.

A year previous to the aged man's death, Martha had met Emil Marek, brilliant young student of technology, six years her junior. He, too, became virtually bewitched by Martha's

radiant beauty. Marek, who before the fateful meeting had been the most promising student of his class, the favorite of his teachers and the pride of his family, suddenly lost all interest in his career. His studies unfinished, jobless, penniless, he married Martha immediately after Fritsch's death. So his young wife, not aroused by him, he grew a full beard. When applying for his life insurance he made himself ten years older—stating that he was thirty-two, while his actuality was but twenty-two years old.

During the years preceding the attempt to take the Anglo-Danubian Lloyd for \$400,000 the Mareks lived in the Moedling villa left to Martha by Fritsch.

It was a hectic life, financed with ill-gotten gain. There were the usual attempts of a gifted young man to make money—all failing flat and consuming the little cash at his disposal. Martha Marek devotedly shared her husband's misfortune as an inventor; his various failures as a business man. In court for the first time it became apparent that always it was she who did the talking when it came to busi-

"THE Cardinal is an old friend of mine," she said casually. "All I have to do is to announce you. I shall be back here in about half an hour."

Schneider agreed. He was about to go into business with a newly founded firm, the Christian Loan Association, and a clerical contact seemed most desirable.

An hour went by. When Martha returned, disappointment was written on her face.

"The Cardinal and I had a most delightful chat," she reported, "but unfortunately he was unable to see anybody else today."

Later Schneider learned from a reliable source that at the time of Mrs. Marek's supposed visit the Cardinal had been in Rome reporting to His Holiness, the Pope.

But yet with this circumstantial evidence as well as provable facts, a more than lenient court arrived at a verdict of somewhere between guilty and not guilty—inconceivable to the American mind.

The Mareks and their accomplices were set free. They had spent over six months in prison while the case was decided in an insurance company on its part found it wise to settle Emil Marek's dubious claims out of court; about \$36,000 was paid to him, most of which immediately went to lawyers and physicians.

It was during April, 1927, that Emil Marek was carried out of the courthouse on a stretcher. A friend, crippled for life, his social and business reputation ruined, his friends gone, his finances desperate. By his side was his wife, devoted, loving, eager to sacrifice everything. A touching picture indeed—the cripple and the beauty.

Public opinion solidly rallied behind Martha Marek. She was admired, pitied, and received basketfuls of flowers.

From 1927 to 1932 the Mareks lived the life of an impoverished middle class couple. Two children were born to them—Ingeborg and Alfons—to be raised in a shack in Vienna's suburb, Hietzing. While their beautiful mother sold vegetables in the market, their crippled father feverishly thought up invention after invention—every one of them a financial failure.

Once during this period of drab drudgery, Emil Marek seemed to have hit upon a more substantial idea—a plant for making artificial skin in Africa.

The Mareks left Austria and went to the African seaport. But the unfortunate inventor's partners failed him, and the factory never got started. Martha Marek opened up a four-hour pressing and cleaning business, and it, too, was a failure. She then applied to an Austrian insurance company to have her furniture insured while en route from Vienna to Algiers.

But insurance companies keep files. There was the recent Marek trial. There was a mysterious blaze on December 8th, 1932, which had destroyed valuable furniture in the couple's Moedling apartment, and had it, too, an insurance company thousands of schillings. Now the companies balked and the furniture stayed in Vienna—and soon the Mareks were back in their shack in Hietzing. (*Continued on page 74*)



The Case of the WHO "LIVED"

AS Mrs. Cora Miller sat in the living-room of her comfortable home on South Gramercy Place in Los Angeles, the door bell rang. A welcoming smile wreathed her features as she threw the door open wide.

"Why, hello, Val!" she said, extending her hand. "Where have you been keeping yourself? You don't get around here very often. How's Leona?"

The good-looking young man accepted a chair. "That's what I've come to see you about, Aunt Cora. I've got news to tell."

Mrs. Miller seated herself opposite him; her eyes twinkling with eager anticipation. "Let's hear it."

"Well, brace yourself for a big surprise. Leona's gone on a trip around the world."

Mrs. Miller's hand flew to her mouth. "You're joking!"



Mrs. Leona May Schmidt, whose inexplicable disappearance led to many theories in the California wastelands. (Below) In this Los Angeles garage a trusting woman met sudden and violent death



SLAIN WIDOW AFTER DEATH

"Well, I guess she didn't want any fuss made about it. She told me to sell the furniture and rent the house."

"Now, Val," Mrs. Miller said spiritedly, "I know you're fibbing! Leon sell her furniture? Not in a thousand years. She thinks too much of her things. All that lovely cut glass and silver! I never heard that it's taken her a lifetime to collect. She wouldn't part with any of it."

"That's what I thought, too, but she's a different woman now that she knows she hasn't long to live."

"How long has she been gone?" Mrs. Miller demanded.

"Let's see. This is March 25th, isn't it? A couple of weeks, I guess. When did you see her last?"

"I think it was about the first of this month. I've been wondering lately why she didn't come over—"

"Well, I guess I'll have to start selling the furniture. She said for me to fill out the receipts that she signed in blank

and give them to the people who bought the stuff. I don't suppose there's anything you'd want."

Mrs. Miller looked thoughtful. "I can hardly believe it, but if she really wants it sold I could use the china cabinet and that nice davenport. What peculiar things people do! Just goes to show one doesn't even know one's own relatives."

"She took out a \$5,000 accident policy before she left,"

"You never can tell what will happen to a person on a trip like that."

"No, I guess it's a good thing to have."

"You're the beneficiary, of course; but I sold her the policy and if she gets killed in a train wreck or anything, I get \$1,000 commission. Is that a deal?"

"Oh, Val, don't joke about a thing like that."

"By the way, just how old is Leona?"

"How old?" She's three years younger than I am, and if

(Right) Guarded by Detective Barber (at left), the man who slew for an incredible motive sits calmly in the house where he was captured. He grimly added: "You were too fast for me," he told the astute sleuths who had trapped him



By

Detective Lieutenant

A. E. KNEPPER

Los Angeles Police
Department

As told to
M. KELLEY ARNOLD

you think for one minute, young man, that I'm going to tell you my age."

Both laughed. "Well, never mind, Aunt Cora. I was just wondering if she told the truth when she made out her application for the insurance policy."

Within a few minutes Ross departed, and Mrs. Miller was left alone with her troubled thoughts. What could have come over Leona, at fifty-nine, to start chasing around the country by herself? But now that Mrs. Miller came to think of it, Leona had often acted rather strangely during the past few years.

She had been morbidly affected by the death of her husband, Jacob Schmidt, several years before. Then, as she was beginning to recover from this great sorrow, her beautiful young daughter, Molly, wife of Valean Ross, had contracted tuberculosis. The frantic mother had spent thousands of dollars in a futile effort to stem the ravages of the dread disease. Treatment by the finest lung specialists, many months spent in the best hospitals, prayers from her heartbroken mother—all had failed to save the girl's life.

Since Molly's death three years before, the young widower had made his home with his mother-in-law. He, too, was suffering with incipient tuberculosis, and was largely dependent upon Mrs. Schmidt for support, although he worked half-heartedly at his job as an insurance salesman.

Both Mrs. Schmidt and Mrs. Miller were fond of Val. He had an ingratiating way about him and the sisters found him pleasant company. He had loved Molly devotedly during their seven years of married life together, and had never ceased grieving for his young wife.

A few days after his visit to Mrs. Miller he disposed of his mother-in-law's furniture, selling it piece by piece to friends and neighbors. The valuable furnishings brought ridiculously low prices, and from the sale Ross realized only \$160. When the house was completely dismantled, he rented it to a family with whom Mrs. Schmidt had been acquainted.

A month slipped by, during which time Mrs. Miller heard nothing from her sister. She wondered at this, but was not unduly alarmed, for she and Leona sometimes didn't see each other for weeks at a time. She'll write, Mrs. Miller told herself, when she gets good and ready.

Jacob Schmidt had left his wife and daughter well provided for. He had been a railroad man, and as a result Leona Schmidt was entitled to free transportation all over the United States. She disliked traveling, though, and seldom made use of her pass.

On the afternoon of April 22nd, 1938—five weeks after Mrs. Schmidt had started on her round-the-world voyage—Mrs. Miller found a letter in her mail-box. It had been posted from the Arcade Station in Los Angeles on April 21st. She tore open the envelope and experienced a sensation of surprise as she saw that the typewritten missive was signed, "Leona May Schmidt."

The contents verified what Val had already told her. Mrs. Schmidt described her visit to the doctor, his diagnosis of her ailment as cancer, and announced her decision to travel around the world in an effort to make the most of the short time remaining to her on this earth. She explained that she had been staying at a downtown hotel while attending to some business matters, and that she'd asked Val to sell her furniture and rent the house.

For several minutes Mrs. Miller sat staring at the letter. How peculiar that Leona should write to her on a typewriter! And that signature—neither "Leona" nor "Ona"—the abbreviation she sometimes used, but "Leona May Schmidt"? Never before had she signed her full name in a letter to a member of the family.

As Mrs. Miller pondered these irregularities, the conviction that something

was radically wrong dawned on her. She felt suddenly cold inside. Even though the signature appeared to be in Leona's handwriting, Mrs. Miller was convinced that her sister had not typed that letter!

She showed it to her married daughter who had been named after the missing woman.

"Look, May—what do you make of this?"

The girl read the letter carefully.

"Do you know what I think, Mother? Auntie never wrote that! It doesn't sound like her, and she wouldn't sign herself, 'Leona May Schmidt.'"

"That's exactly my own opinion."

Tears welled up in the younger woman's eyes. "Oh, Mother, what do you suppose has happened to Auntie? Maybe she's been kidnapped! Maybe she's being held somewhere against her will. And did you notice that the letter was mailed right here in Los Angeles?"

"I certainly did. The first thing in the morning, I'm going down to the police station and report her absence."

On the following morning Mrs. Miller called at the Missing Persons Detail in the City Hall and requested aid in locating her sister.

CAPTAIN FRANK CONDAFFER, to whom she told her story, ran a hand through his thick, wavy hair as his caller talked. It was a mannerism he had when thinking deeply. "Do your sister and her son-in-law get along all right together?" he asked in his booming but friendly voice.

"Perfectly."

"Pretty nice sort of fellow, is he, this Val Ross?"

"He's a fine young man. We all think a lot of him." Condaffer was thoughtful. "You say Mrs. Schmidt was apparently in good health the last time you saw her?"

"She seemed to be. I didn't dream she was feeling badly."

"M'm. Well, Mrs. Miller, you go on back home. The case will be assigned to University Division for investigation, and some officers will be out to see you. We've got a good description and maybe they can locate your sister in a few days. In the meantime, try not to worry too much."

"Thank you."

When Mrs. Miller had gone, Captain Condaffer turned to his secretary, Nancy Lyman.

"Nancy, get that Missing Person report typed up. The University boys have got a murder mystery on their hands."



Detective Lieutenant A. E. Knepper (*left*), co-author, and Detective W. E. Tooie, who were instrumental in solving the mystifying case, examine evidence found among the accused man's possessions

Miss Lyman looked at him in astonishment. "What on earth makes you say that?"

"You wait and see. I've investigated too many of these cases to be fooled by this one. I hated to tell that poor woman, but the fact is, she'll never see her sister alive again," he said with finality. "Add a note to the bottom of the report instructing the investigating officers not to contact the son-in-law, but to see Mrs. Miller first."

The next day, when the report reached Captain S. S. Stone, commander of University Detective Bureau, he summoned my partner, Detective W. E. Toole, and me to his office.

"Call on this woman," he ordered, handing me the report, "and find out what it's all about. I don't like the sound of it."

We left immediately for Mrs. Miller's address, mistakenly

sister have remained at a downtown hotel all this time when she had her own perfectly good home? And why didn't she tell me about this illness of hers and her decision to take a trip around the world?"

I asked Mrs. Miller to excuse us while Toole and I held a brief conference in an adjoining room. At the end of it we rejoined her.

"Mrs. Miller," I said, "we don't like to alarm you unnecessarily, but we feel you should be told that there is a very strong possibility that your sister is dead."

She covered her eyes with her hand for a moment, then said bravely, "You needn't be afraid to speak frankly with me. I've been through so much in these last few days that anything is preferable to this awful suspense. I want to help you all I can. We must find my sister, dead or alive."

"Very well. You can help a great deal if you'll do exactly as we tell you. For instance, the next time Val Ross—"

"Oh," she interrupted protestingly, "you don't suspect him, do you? Val would never harm a hair of her head."

"I'm sorry, but we do suspect that he knows more about Mrs. Schmidt's disappearance than he has made you believe. At any rate, he's the only person who has any information regarding this matter. Now, whenever he calls on you, be sure to act naturally. Be polite, and don't pump him. Let him do the talking. And as soon as he leaves, write down everything he's said that you can remember. Then call us. Will you do that?"

"I will, but I don't believe Val knows a thing more than he's told me."

Mrs. Miller had occasion to telephone us the next afternoon. When we arrived she greeted us excitedly.

"He was here this morning. He asked if I'd heard from Leona."

"And what did you say?"

"I told him no."

I know my jaw must have dropped. Ross, we reasoned, was in all probability the author of the typewritten letter Mrs. Miller had received, and having mailed it himself, he was in a position to *know* she had received it. Thus, her denial would be certain to arouse his suspicions.

"Was that a mistake?" Mrs. Miller asked anxiously. "He took me by surprise and I said no before I had time to think."

"It would have been better if you had acknowledged getting the letter," Toole told her gently, "but perhaps no harm has been done. What did he say when you told him you hadn't heard from her?"

"He looked very much surprised. He said, 'That's funny. I had a card from her yesterday, mailed from San Francisco. She said she was having a good time and expected to leave for Honolulu the next day.'"

"**WELL,**" I said, "we've been doing a little checking this morning. We went down to the Santa Fe Railway office and found that she hasn't used her pass this year. Then we checked the banks and learned that she has made no withdrawals since the first of January. Now, if she didn't travel on her pass, and didn't withdraw any money from the bank, how is she financing this trip?"

"She may have quite a little money with her. My sister's rather well off, you know."

We didn't need to be told that. We'd found a total of \$15,000 cash in five separate bank accounts.

"Oh, that reminds me," Mrs. Miller continued. "Val's told me three different stories about what he was supposed to do with the money he got from the sale of Leona's furniture. First, he said he was to send it to her; then he said she told him to deposit it in the bank. Yesterday he told me he'd seen her at her house and given it to her. He said she was with some man who had parked his car two blocks away from



The slayer, nonchalantly smoking a cigarette, identifies the crude cross held by Lieutenant Knepper as being similar to one he said he placed on his victim's grave. Note Joshua trees in background

believing that we were starting another routine investigation. Had we but known it, we were embarking upon one of the most difficult assignments of our entire careers as police officers.

Mrs. Miller repeated to us all the information she had given Captain Condafer.

"The most mysterious part of the whole thing is this letter I received, which was supposed to be from my sister. I can't understand why it was typewritten. Leona never owned a typewriter, and I'm positive she didn't know how to operate one. Still, it looks like her signature. But why she should sign her name so formally in a letter to me is more than I can figure out. I've just about come to the conclusion that the whole letter is a forgery."

"Did your sister have a bank account?" Toole asked.

"Oh, yes. She kept her money in several different banks. I can get you a list of them."

"And this \$5,000 accident policy," I said. "What do you think about her taking out that policy?"

"Well, I'm named as the beneficiary, Val says, and it seems to me that if she's been—if some one has done away with her in order to collect the insurance, *that* person would have been named as beneficiary and not me."

This sounded logical enough; but even so, my partner and I were now convinced that the missing woman had met with foul play.

"And another thing," Mrs. Miller went on, "why should my



The pointing finger indicates the luggage compartment of the car in which the strange murderer transported Mrs. Schmidt's body to where he believed would be its last resting place—a lonely spot in the desert.

the house. After giving her the money, he followed her and saw her get into the car, but he couldn't get a good look at the man's face. He told me he wouldn't know him again if he saw him."

"No, I guess he wouldn't," Toole remarked grimly.

We left soon afterward, promising to keep Mrs. Miller informed of the progress of the case.

THAT night we wired the San Francisco police, asking them to ascertain whether or not a Mrs. Leona May Schmidt had booked passage for Honolulu. The airline never came back promptly. No person of that name had booked passage on any steamer bound for the Hawaiian Islands.

A net of circumstantial evidence was beginning to tighten around Val Ross, with each new development pointing to his guilty knowledge of the fate of his mother-in-law had met. The most puzzling element of the case, however, was the apparent lack of a reasonable motive. According to all available information, the two had been on the friendliest of terms, not only during the seven years that Val and Val had been married, but for three years since the girl had come to live with Mrs. Schmidt and her husband had presented the young couple with a home, assisted them financially on numerous occasions and, following the death of her husband and daughter, Leona Schmidt had invited young Ross to live in her house. Not many women displayed such generosity toward their sons-in-law.

Why, then—assuming that Val Ross had some guilty connection with Mrs. Schmidt's mysterious disappearance—had he done such a hideous deed? It would seem to be a case of "killing the goose that laid the golden egg."

Evidently Ross had no inkling of the fact that all of his statements to Mrs. Miller had been questioned; for he continued to call upon her at frequent intervals. On several of these visits Mrs. Miller attempted to learn his present address, only to have him gracefully sidestep the issue each time.

He said once that he was staying with friends whom he didn't wish to involve in the event that Mrs. Schmidt's disappearance became a matter of public knowledge. On another occasion he said he had rented a room in the southwest section of the city.



(Left to right) Detectives W. F. Schubert, L. O. Jennings, J. P. Donahoe and M. C. O'Connor are pictured during a tense moment in their search for the grave of the woman who "lived" after death.



Molly Ross (above) died of tuberculosis three years before her mother, Leona Schmidt, vanished so strangely. The former's young husband, Valesan, was grief-stricken over the loss of his wife.

minutes. An elevator whisked us up to the eighth floor. As we entered the office where Ross worked, our informant hurried down the aisle to meet us.

"He just went out that other door to the elevator. Hurry, or we'll miss him."

We rushed out into the hallway. A good-looking, well-dressed young man stood with his finger pressed on the signal button.

"Mr. Ross?" I said as we reached his side.

"Yes? What is it?" he asked blankly.

"Mr. Ross, we're police officers. We want to ask you a few questions about your mother-in-law, Mrs. Schmidt."

The suspect's face went paper-white.

"I hope nothing's happened to her!"

"She's been reported to us as a missing person," Toole said calmly. "I understand you formerly lived in her house. Suppose you come to the station with us so we can get more definite information."

"Certainly. Glad to."

In the police car Ross tried vainly to still the trembling of his hands. Finally he put them in his pockets and kept them there.

"Who reported her missing?" he inquired. "She's on a trip around the world, you know."

"Her sister asked us to locate her," I replied. "Nice spring day, isn't it?"

"Yes. I think she's in Honolulu by this time."

We did not encourage him in his efforts to discuss the case. It was not until we had him seated in a chair in a "quiz" room at the station that we really got down to business.

"Now, Mr. Ross," I began sternly, "we want you to tell us where Mrs. Schmidt is."

He withdrew a spoolless white handkerchief from his pocket and with a shaking hand mopped the perspiration from his forehead.

"Sure is a warm day," he said apologetically. "Well, she went to a doctor and found she had cancer. She was scared to death. He told her she couldn't live long, so she evidently made up her mind to enjoy herself while she could. She said she'd be away a year or longer."

"Where did she go?" Toole demanded.

Toole and I contacted postal authorities, but were unable to find that either Mrs. Schmidt or Val Ross had filed notice of a change of address. Mail addressed to both of them was still being delivered to the house in which they had formerly lived. We dared not examine this mail for fear that the present occupants would reveal to Ross the fact that a police investigation was under way.

Getting this information was as difficult as he may have imagined, even though he didn't know where he resided. An official of the insurance company for which he worked informed us that Ross called at the office every few days to turn in his reports. Of necessity, we took this official into our confidence and were rewarded by being offered his complete cooperation.

We made a thorough investigation of the \$5,000 policy Ross had written, insuring his mother-in-law against accident. The signature appearing to bear Mrs. Schmidt's signature was obtained from the woman's home office in an Eastern state. We took a photostat copy of the application, together with a number of bona fide specimens of Mrs. Schmidt's handwriting, to Captain Adolph Carstensen, Jr., our police handwriting expert. After microscopic examinations and comparisons, the Captain rendered an opinion:

"I believe the signature on the insurance application to be a forgery, but it is so nearly perfect that I would be unable to testify in a court of law to that effect."

Disappointed over our failure definitely to establish the fact that Ross had forged his mother-in-law's name to the

"Now, that I can't tell you, except that a few weeks ago she sent me a postcard from San Francisco, saying she was leaving for Honolulu. I haven't heard from her since that time."

"Have you got that postcard with you?"

"What? Oh, the postcard. No, I'm sorry to say that I haven't. I destroyed it, never dreaming, of course, that I'd need it again."

We called his attention to the fact that Mrs. Schmidt had made no use of her railroad pass since last January. We reminded him, also, that her bank accounts showed no withdrawals over that same period of time.

"Well, she was a peculiar woman and very reticent about her affairs," Ross said. "She seldom confided in me. I can tell you this, though: She had a mysterious man friend. I saw her get into a car with him one day. It was a black sedan, but I couldn't get a good look at his face. He—"

"Not so fast, Ross," I interrupted. "Didn't you sell Mrs. Schmidt's furniture?"

A muscle in his cheek twitched. "She told me to sell it!" he replied angrily. "She signed receipts in blank and I filled them out and gave them to the people who bought the stuff."

"What did you do with the money?"

"Gave it to her. That's what I was trying to tell you. She came out to the house one afternoon right after I'd sold it and I gave her the money. That's the day she went away with the man in the black sedan. I've never seen her since."

I decided on a shot in the dark. "What about those checks you've been writing against her account?"

To my relief, the shot found its mark.

"Checks? Oh, you mean that account in the American National Bank at San Bernardino? Well, that's easy to explain. She signed about six blank checks before she left and told me to fill in the amounts. Said for me to pay the taxes and have the roof repaired. She also said I could use what money I needed to make the payments on my car."

"She must trust you," Toole put in.

"Sure, she does."

"You could have written a check for \$10,000, and it would have been honored, I suppose?"

"I guess so. I never tried it."

"Your mother-in-law thought a lot of you, didn't she?"

"Well, she was mighty nice to me."

For perhaps an hour Toole and I hammered away at him with questions. He answered each one glibly, not realizing, apparently, that he repeatedly contradicted himself. He must have believed he was making a favorable impression, for all signs of nervousness had now disappeared. He talked volubly and at such length on unimportant and irrelevant matters that we had frequently to stop him.

Finally I produced the typewritten letter that Mrs. Miller had received. "Do you recognize that?"

He scrutinized it carefully. "No, I don't believe I do."

"It is supposed to have been written by Mrs. Schmidt to her sister, and it was mailed from Los Angeles several weeks after Mrs. Schmidt supposedly started on her trip around the world. How do you account for that? If she was in Los Angeles all that time, why didn't she stay in her own house?"

"You've got me there. Women do funny things, you know."

"Doesn't it seem strange that she would entrust the sale of her furniture to you when she was right here in the city? Why should she do that?"

Val Ross stared at the floor. He made no reply, but sat there, hands gripping his knees.

"Now, Ross," I said, "we've gone about far enough. You've been under a terrific strain trying to figure out these answers, and incidentally, all the answers are wrong. Without any more stalling, we want to know where Mrs. Schmidt is."



Detective Lieutenant Knepper (center) and his colleagues, Detectives Toole (left) and Frank Ryan, examine the weapon which snuffed out the life of Leona Schmidt. It was found in the slayer's suitcase

Ross moistened his lips. "Well, Lieutenants, she's dead."

He made the grim announcement arrogantly, watching us closely, on the alert for our reaction.

"That's no news to us," I said. "What did you do with her body?"

"She's dead, but I don't know where the body is."

"You don't know! You killed her, didn't you?"

"Listen, fellows." He leaned back in his chair, crossed his arms over his chest and faced us defiantly. "I killed her, but I buried her so far out on the desert that you'll never find her!"

FOR a moment neither Toole nor I could speak. The confession had come so suddenly after all his lies and evasions that we could hardly believe we had heard aright. Finally I found my voice.

"Where did this murder take place?"

"I killed her in her own home out on South Hobart Boulevard."

"What with?"

"I shot her with my revolver—a 32.20 frontier model."

"Where is that gun now?"

"In the second drawer of my dresser."

"Where do you reside?" I asked, getting out my notebook. He gave an address on West 79th Street.

"Why did you kill her?"

Ross' lips parted in a snarl. "First of all," he said softly, leaning forward and looking me squarely in the eye, "I want you fellows to know that I have absolutely no regret for what I did. I'm not at all remorseful. We got into an argument over Molly, my dead wife. Molly was dying of tuberculosis. She'd already had five ribs removed, and she needed another operation. We had to have \$1,000, and her mother refused to give it to us, even as a loan—"

"Ross," I said severely, "you're lying. Detective Toole and I have seen receipted doctor bills totaling thousands of dollars, and all paid by Mrs. Schmidt. You know she did everything in her power to save that girl's life. Her sister has told us that Mrs. Schmidt worshiped Molly. She even gave you and Molly a house to live in. What kind of rat are you to make a statement like that? You had another motive. What was it?"

"I'm telling you the truth," Ross said doggedly. "During our argument I said to Mrs. Schmidt, 'Maybe you helped to kill Molly. And maybe some day you'll pay for that. I may

be the one who'll make you pay for it." While I was talking, she walked into her room and put on her coat as if she intended to go for a walk. I stepped into my own bedroom, got my gun and met her in the hallway. I grabbed her by the left shoulder and swung her around. Then I shot her through the head."

"Then what?" Toole prompted.

"She dropped on the Navajo rug in the hall and I let her lie there."

"What time of day was it?"

"It was eleven o'clock on the morning of March 9th. After I killed her I sat down in the living-room and thought it over. Finally I went back and wrapped her in the Navajo rug. Then I went to a dime store and bought four yards of green oilcloth and a hundred feet of hemp rope. I wrapped the oilcloth around the bundle and tied it with rope."

As Ross described the crime he grew more and more excited, seeming almost to relish the telling.

"Late that afternoon I went downtown and rented a 1937 Chevrolet touring sedan with a trunk in the back. I drove it out to her house and parked it. Then I sat down to wait for the neighbors' lights to go out. I thought they'd never turn out the lights and go to bed. Finally, all the houses were dark, so I drove the car around in the alley and parked it at the gate. I had trouble getting the body out to the car, but I managed it somehow. Then I got a spade and started for the desert."

"Which direction did you take?"

"I went over the new Ridge Route."

"How far?"

"I don't know. After I killed her I took a few drinks and was about half drunk. I remember going through town at sixty miles an hour and being afraid some cop would stop me."

"You'll have to remember more than that. Describe the route you took."

Ross told in detail of the streets he had traversed.

"When I reached the Ridge Route, I turned off to the right on a paved road. I went through some hills, then dropped down into flat country. It was pitch dark and there was a drizzling rain."

"Are you willing to try to help us locate the grave?" I asked.

"I'll do my best, but I doubt if we ever find it."

Pausing only long enough to inform Captain Stone that the suspect had confessed the murder of his mother-in-law, we accompanied Ross to his residence. As we started to enter he remarked: "Fellows, you'd better get in there first and get that gun, or it won't cost the State anything to try me."

Ignoring the implied suicide threat, we proceeded to search the room. The lethal weapon and a number of Mrs.

Schmidt's personal effects were recovered from Ross' suitcase.

"Anything else here that we should know about?" Toole asked.

"Well, on a shelf in the closet you'll find \$700 in cash. It's money I drew out of her account. I was saving it for a getaway when things got hot."

The money in our possession, we started for the desert with our prisoner, after stopping at the station to pick up Detective Frank E. Ryan, who had assisted us in the latter part of our investigation.

Directed by Ross, we drove out San Fernando Road until we came to the scenic Ridge Route. At this point Ross was warned not to lead us on any wild-goose chase, but to indicate the exact spot on the highway where he had turned off to the right.

At the first paved road he spoke. "Turn here."

Twenty-three miles farther on he ordered us to stop.

"IT'S somewhere along here where these Joshua trees are."

He alighted from the car and climbed under a barbed-wire fence on the left side of the highway. We followed, armed with spades and shovels. At a point about seventy-five yards from the fence, he stopped.

"Here."

We dug frantically, working against time as it was then almost six o'clock and would soon be dark. A dozen holes were dug near the place he had indicated, but there was no sign of what we sought.

Ross seemed to shrink within himself as we looked at him hopefully.

"I know it's somewhere around here, because I could see the outlines of the Joshua trees, even though it was dark. I stuck myself on some of the thorns."

We began to suspect that Ross had had an accomplice in disposing of his victim's body. Mrs. Schmidt had been a stout woman, weighing approximately 170 pounds. It seemed highly improbable that a man of Ross' slight stature could have dragged or carried her body that far without assistance. "Who helped you with this job, Ross?" I inquired, hoping to catch him off guard.

"Nobody. I did it by myself."

By this time darkness had fallen, and nothing more could be accomplished until daylight. We returned to Los Angeles and lodged our prisoner in a cell.

At eight o'clock the next morning, May 19th, 1938, thirty detectives accompanied us back to the desert for a more thorough search.

Ross sat in the shade of a manzanita bush while we worked like beavers, spading up the ground over a wide area. Hours of back-breaking labor brought no results. A blistering sun added to our discomfort, and it was a completely exhausted group of men who returned to the station that night—with the grave's whereabouts as much a mystery as ever.

Before resuming the search on the following day, Toole and I ascertained that the speedometer of the rented car in which Ross had transported his victim's body to the desert showed that the automobile had been driven 205 miles while in the suspect's possession.

We decided to check this distance. Starting in a police car from the rental agency, I told Ross to direct us over exactly the same route he had traveled the night of the murder.

"Think hard, and don't give us any wrong steers."

"Okay, I'll do my best."

At his direction we traversed the identical streets over which Ross had driven. At last we reached San Fernando Road, which led directly to the Ridge Route. When the speedometer showed that we had covered exactly 102½ miles, I stopped the car. Somewhat to our surprise and satisfaction we found ourselves at approximately the same spot on the desert that Ross had named (*Continued on page 72*)



It was James Bandy (arrow), shown with other members of the search party, who finally located Mrs. Schmidt's lonely grave in the Mojave Desert. "You'll never find her," the over-confident slayer had declared

HOW AN OKLAHOMA CRIME PUZZLE WAS CRACKED

SECRET IN THE CLAY



By Former Sheriff GEORGE LONG

Kingfisher County, Oklahoma

FRITZ TRO allowed the mail-order catalogue he had been reading to slip from the bed. He lay there thoughtfully as he listened to his friend, Earl Young, hitch up his team and rattle out of the barnyard in the heavy farm wagon. A good boy, Earl, he mused; it was nice to have him drop in every night or so. But—how old he made a man feel afterward! Like Methuselah, almost!

Tro sighed, staring down into his drink. Well, he was old. It was more than fifty years, now, since he had left Germany to come to America. Almost a quarter of a century since he had started out this Kingfisher County homestead. Where had the years gone to? What did he have to look back upon but a life of hard work?

The old man reflected, never dreaming that he shortly would be the principal character in one of Oklahoma's strangest murder cases. He came out of his reverie suddenly, and shook his head, frowning. All his life he had acted on impulse, and now he came to a decision. Why not get a little enjoyment from his money before it was too late? There was a daughter in California who had asked him to visit her. He could easily sell the farm—or find a tenant for it. Exitedly, he began to plan as he lay there, still half asleep.

This, the opening scene in the death drama, took place on September 20th. It marked the beginning of a series of incidents which, ordinarily, would have aroused suspicion at

once. Unfortunately, the community differed from the average. The farmers of the neighborhood were predominantly German—prosperous, close-mouthed people who made minding their own business a religion. Tro was old enough to take care of his own affairs, they told themselves.

Thus, almost two weeks passed before Ed Tro, a son who lived at Pond Creek, Oklahoma, received some alarming news. He drove to Kingfisher immediately, picked up two friends, T. L. Thompson and W. J. Brown, and proceeded to his father's farm.

As they parked the car in the yard, a man of about thirty-five stopped ploughing in the field and walked up to meet them. He was the usual hard-working German type; ruddy-faced, open of countenance. He introduced himself as John Wirth.

"You're Mr. Tro's son?" he inquired, smiling at Ed Tro.

"How's your father getting along?"

"That's what I wanted to ask you," said Tro. "Just where is he, anyway?"

Wirth looked at him, puzzled. "Where is he?" he repeated. "Yes, I understand that no one has seen him around here for almost two weeks."

"That's about right, I guess," Wirth agreed slowly. "You mean to say that he didn't see you before he left?"

"I didn't even know that he had left," said Tro, with a touch of asperity. "Now, if you don't mind, tell me where

**As told to
JIM THOMPSON**

he's gone and what you're doing here at the farm."

Wirth's good-natured face reddened.

"You've got a sister in California, haven't you?" he inquired. "A Mrs. Anna Bates? Well, that's where Mr. Tro said he was going. As far as I know, though, I've got a right to buy. I bought Mr. Tro's livestock and implements for \$650, and I paid him \$450 for a year's rent."

"But you've been selling the wheat my father had stored."

"That's right, I have been. It took almost all the money I had to get moved in here, so Mr. Tro said to sell the grain and pay him five per cent interest on what I received. I've been saving the weight-bills. Come on up to the house and I'll show them to you."

"Well, I'll be danged!" Ed Tro began, realizing that he had seriously offended the man.

But Wirth had already started for the house. "Come on," he called, over his shoulder.

Tro went with him. He found the four-room residence scrubbed to an immaculate cleanliness. He met Mrs. Wirth and the three young children of the family. And Wirth produced the weight-bills for the wheat he had sold.

Tro could not help feeling a little ashamed. "I'm afraid I gave you a bad time," he apologized. "I was naturally worried about my father, and—"

"Sure," Wirth smiled suddenly. "It's all right. I guess I'd feel the same way if I was in your place. I don't know

(Left) Just outside the doorway of this barn, seen in background, determined officers, led to the spot near Kingfisher, Oklahoma, by the strange actions of a dog, came upon the tragic secret concealed in the clay

Fritz Tro (circle), kindly and well-loved farmer of Kingfisher County, Okla. Because of his penchant for impromptu trips, like anxiety was felt when he disappeared. But an alert Sheriff, investigating, gleaned startling information—that pointed to wanton murder



Dad would have the money; Wirth would have possession of the farm. They'd consider that receipt enough."

"And Wirth is saving the weight-bills on the wheat he sells?"

"That's right."

I explained the matter. As Tro had said, the arrangement that his father and Wirth had entered into was not one to excite suspicion. Also, there was nothing remarkable in the fact that Wirth had paid the \$1,100 in cash rather than by check. The honest but not always well-educated residents of the community often trusted banks, and frequently hoarded money in their homes. There was a story current at the time that an old German couple who were about to buy a farm had simply removed a few bricks from their fireplace and taken out the necessary \$3,000 in moldy currency.

Such was the uneasy feeling that there was something distinctly wrong in this affair; that in some detail, which Ed Tro had placed before me, there was a sinister flaw.

"I'll tell you what you'd better do," I said at last. "Wire your sisters and any other relatives your father might be likely to visit, and ask if he's arrived yet. Meanwhile, I'll poke around and see what I can find out."

Tro arose. "I'll get busy right away," he promised, "and be back in the morning. What do you think about Big George? You know Wirth told me Dad went off with him."

"Leave him to me," I said.

Big George—his last name does not matter—had been a familiar character around the town of Pond Creek for years. He was considerably larger than the average man, and he was strong in proportion to his size. If he had been a man of means he would have been a prize-fighter, but as far as I knew his only bouts had been with John Barleycorn. When he felt that it was safe to do so he sold a little whisky; the rest of the time he performed odd jobs, gambled for small stakes, or merely loafed. Generally, he was more pitied than condemned. Everyone, myself included, considered him harmless.

Nevertheless, I got in touch with officers at Pond Creek, and asked them to keep George under surveillance.

"Don't arrest him," I advised, "or even question him. It's quite possible that Grandpa Tro is all right, and his son doesn't want to be involved in any trouble. But if he seems to have too much money let me know at once."

Like almost everyone else in the Kingfisher neighborhood I was acquainted with Earl Young. Furthermore, I admired him. Although he had never operated his own farm, doing his own housework as well, and set an example for others with his thrifit, hard work, and cleanly habits. His farm was about twelve miles northwest of town, and about two miles from Fritz Tro's. I drove out to it as soon as I had finished talking to the Pond Creek officers.

"We're getting a little alarmed about Mr. Tro," I explained. "Understand that you were one of the last people to see him."

"I saw him on Monday night, September 20th," Young agreed. "I went over to borrow a wagon to haul my wheat young."

"Did he say anything to you about leaving?"

Young hesitated. "Well—he may have made some mention of it. He always rambled on quite a bit when he got to drinking."

"How long were you there?"

"Around two hours."

"But—maybe you'd better start at the beginning, Earl." I suggested, "and tell me everything you can remember about the evening. Were you in the habit of dropping in on Mr. Tro pretty often?"

Young nodded. "Yes, I was. He'd been all over the world. He had a lot of interesting stories, and I liked to listen to him. Monday night I rode by his house on horseback about nine-

thirty. I saw that the lamp was burning in his northeast bedroom, and I called out to him. He called for me to come in."

"I went to the back door, but it was locked, and he had to get out of bed to open it. He said that he didn't know how it happened—he'd never locked the back door in his life. I went in and sat down and he went back to bed. He drank quite a bit, but I didn't touch anything. Well, he'd no sooner started talking than some one in the front room began clearing his throat—real noisy, as though something was being disturbed and wanted us to shut up.

"I asked Grandpa Tro who it was. He said that it was a man named Wirth who he'd hired to cut Kafir corn for him. He told me that he didn't really want any help, but that Wirth needed work."

"We talked until about eleven-thirty, with Wirth coughing

however, unable to add greatly to the information I already had. According to him, the Wirths had come into the neighborhood about six weeks before, apparently without funds or any means of support. He had a small tenant house which was empty, so he offered to let them use it; he also gave Wirth a little work. They remained there about a month. They had not all moved to the Tro place at the same time. Wirth had gone first, on Saturday, September 18th, 1915. On the following Tuesday his wife and children joined him.

I referred to the newspaper cutting to show as they had for that day. I had my suspicions, but there was no chance that Mr. Tro was safe and sound. He had disappeared before on the spur of the moment, only to turn up a few days, weeks, or months later, chuckling happily over the discomfiture he had caused his relatives and friends. Possibly, he would do so again—would return safely, as usual.

chance to invest it. When the opportunity came—when your father offered to sell his stock and equipment and rent the place cheap—he took advantage of it.

"All right. That's the story Wirth would want us to believe, and for the moment we'll accept it. But we can't accept it for more than a moment."

Tro leaned forward. "What do you mean?"

"I MEAN that Wirth's story is its own contradiction. If he was so poor, so thrifty, shrewd soul he would like to have us believe he is, he wouldn't have turned over his last cent to your father, and then started to borrow it back with interest. And that's what he is doing every time he drives a load of wheat to town."

At the suggestion of D. K. Cunningham, attorney of Kingfisher, a warrant was sworn out for Wirth on a charge of stealing wheat; and I set out immediately to serve it. Accompanying me were two farmers, John McGinn and Emil Schmidt, County Jailer George Collier, and Doc Young, father of Ed Young.

I should mention here that considerably more time had elapsed since Mr. Tro had come into my office that morning than the story indicates. It was late afternoon when we left Kingfisher, and night had fallen when we reached our destination. The main road passed within about fifty feet of the back door of the house. I parked the car, and we were walking in it, and started across the yard.

The little house was strangely quiet—quiet with the foreboding silence that comes when people suddenly interrupt their conversation. The shades were drawn tightly. As I passed around the building to the front door, I thought I heard the tread of a stealthy foot and a sibilant, fear-hoarsened whisper. Then, all was still again.

The noise of my boots upon the porch seemed shockingly loud.

I knocked. There was no answer. From inside came the whimper of a child, and an angry mutter of dismay.

"All right!" it was a man's guttural voice—"what do you want?"

"I'm Sheriff George Long," I called back. "Open up!"

Again came that angry muttering—talking—but the lock clicked and the door swung open.

A man about thirty-four stood before me. He was of a rather slight build, and, it seemed to me, inoffensive—almost meek—in appearance. Behind him stood his wife, an attractive woman of about thirty years.

"You're John Wirth?" I asked.

"Yes."

"You're under arrest for stealing wheat. Get into your clothes and come along."

His mouth dropped open. "But I haven't stolen any wheat! I've saved a weight-bill on every bushel I sold. L—"

"But where else could he go?"

"I'm afraid," I said gently, "that he didn't go any place."

He started to protest. "You think that Big George—"

"No—and Big George. Your father didn't have \$1,100 with him. He didn't have it because Wirth didn't give it to him."

"How do you know that?"

I told him what I had learned from Ingleking and Young: that Wirth had moved into the neighborhood destitute; that he had lived rent-free for a month, and that, apparently, he had begged Mr. Tro for a job.

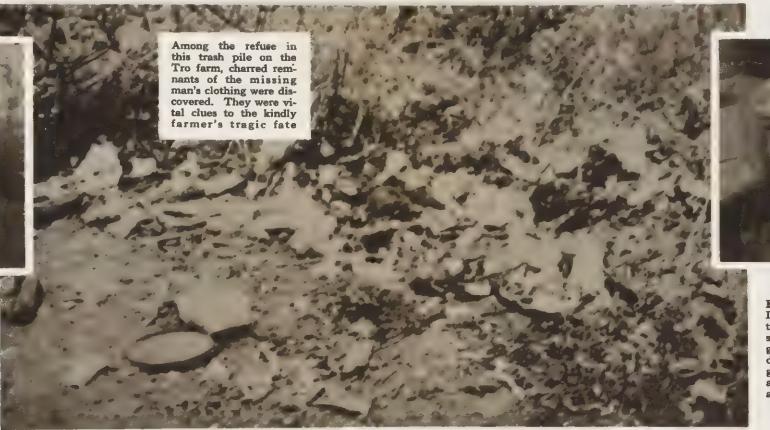
"But that doesn't prove—"

I held up my hand. "Just a minute, now. I know what you're going to say—Wirth is like a lot of other old-country farmers; they'd go to bed hungry before they'd dig into a cent of their capital. He could have had money in his pocket all the time he was starving himself and his family, and while he was pleading for a job. He was just waiting for a good



Among the refuse in this trash pile on the Tro farm, charred remnants of the missing man's clothing were discovered. They were vital clues to the kindly farmer's tragic fate

Like all criminals, this man (above), the crafty slayer of Fritz Tro, was a coward. It was this hideous cowardice that finally condemned him in the net laid by keen-minded Sheriff Long



Former Sheriff George Long (above), who tells this story. Notwithstanding the lack of tangible evidence of murder, he ferreted out the grim facts in the case, and brought about the amazing denouement

every few minutes. Then, I asked Grandpa if I could borrow his wagon, and he said sure, that he wouldn't be hauling any wheat for several weeks. I took the wagon and left."

"And that was the last time you saw Mr. Tro?

"That was the last time."

"What did you do with the wagon?"

"I DIDN'T do anything with it," said Young, coloring with chagrin. "This fellow Wirth—I knew it was him, having seen him around the place—came over Wednesday morning and got it. He didn't say a word to me about it; just hitched a team to it and drove off. I thought it was a mighty funny way to act, and started to shout at him, but he just sort of course that Mr. Tro had been here after the wagon, and as long as I was in me I decided I'd better not say anything."

"Now, let me get this straight," I said. "The only reason Mr. Tro gave for hiring Wirth was that he needed the money?"

"Yes. He said he had a wife and three children to feed. He came here, now, Sheriff," he added hastily, following my line of reasoning, "you don't want to jump to any conclusions. Wirth's from the old country, you know, and—"

"Yes, I know," I interrupted. "He could still have a nice wad of money and feel that he had to pinch every penny. Do you know where he lived before he moved to Mr. Tro's place?"

"He and his family were staying at D. Ingleking's." I thanked Earl, and went to see Mr. Ingleking. He was,

Morning came, and the possibility grew dim. When Ed Tro entered my office his face was gray with worry.

"It looks bad," he said, sinking into a chair. "My sister who lives in New York is traveling in Canada, and the two in California have seen nothing of Dad. The same goes for my relatives here in Oklahoma."

"Have you any others?"

"Not in this country."

I shook my head. "Well, it's a certainty your father didn't go to Germany this time; not with a war going on."

"But where else could he go?"

"I'm afraid," I said gently, "that he didn't go any place."

He started to protest. "You think that Big George—"

"No—and Big George. Your father didn't have \$1,100 with him. He didn't have it because Wirth didn't give it to him."

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"But where else could he go?"

"I'm afraid," I said gently, "that he didn't go any place."

He stared at me in dismay, then shrugged his shoulders.

"If you say I have to, I guess I do. I'll be ready in a minute."

Mrs. Wirth, who had been listening silently, brought his overalls. He put them on while I stood in the doorway and watched. Evidently, however, on second thought, he did not wish to go into town in such rough garb. He said something in German to his wife, and she went into the bedroom, returning with a suit of clothes. He slipped out of the overalls, and put on the suit.

"All right, Sheriff," he said humbly, "I guess I'm all—"

He broke off, frowning, leaving the sentence unfinished, and slumped his pockets.

"Wait just a second, will you?" he asked. "I've forgotten something."

(Continued on page 88)



SIX DOOMED

By
GEORGE COURSON

NEAR the Brooklyn Navy Yard, along the waterfront section of New York City, is Navy Street, and on this thoroughfare stood a dingy, inconspicuous-looking building, numbered 113. The grimy, curtained windows and the big wooden door that was always closed might mean little to the casual stroller, but to the residents of the vicinity, it was a place to hurry by without a glance, with perhaps a muttered prayer.

The police knew about the place that bore the sign "Cafe" on the window, and whenever there was trouble in the district they would pay it a flying visit. They would find behind the frowzy, curtained windows and closed door, a bar and a dozen tables and chairs; the chairs were of metal and the tables had marble tops. Usually there would be a handful of men, some in shirtsleeves, sitting at the tables, eating, drinking, smoking, playing cards. If they searched the men, they could be found carrying as they lined up along the wall; but there is no record that any guns were ever found, nor was any one arrested.

The building was watched, nevertheless, and gradually it acquired a reputation in police circles as the gathering place of the distict bad men, and as such they were nicknamed the Navy Street Gang. They acknowledged themselves professional criminals, and in the never-easing struggle for power they became involved in one of the most vicious gang feuds of modern times. New York, with its teeming millions, its unparalleled commercial wealth, was a rich prize for gangland depredations, and the city still feels the mark that the Navy Street Gang left.

Gangsters live by the law of the jungle, and when the Morello mobsters established themselves as leaders of the New York underworld, there were those who did not see eye to eye with them and who thought that they could do better



(Top) Residents of "Little Italy" celebrate a feast. The numbered men are members of the notorious Navy Street Gang: Andrea Ricci (1), Ralph Daniello (2), Leopoldo Lauritano (3), Alessandro Vollero (4) and "Tom the Turk" Pagano (5). (Circle) An early picture of Vollero, vicious leader

in their seat. Among this latter group were members of the Coney Island and Navy Street gangs, who were just beginning to feel their own strength and who wanted New York for themselves.

Thus it was that toward the close of a hot and humid summer, things began to happen at 113 Navy Street.

One sultry evening in early September, there was a conference of the leaders, attended by Don Pellegrino Marano



MEN

**SMASHING THE GANGS
OF "LITTLE ITALY"**

will be only for us. We will get full control of the gambling, policy and artichoke money."

Vollero, key man of the Navy Street Gang, nodded in appreciation. "For my part I would like to consent," he admitted, as he shook the ash off his cigar. "But you'll have to convince Lauritano here. He's a friend of the Morellos. He would like the idea."

All eyes turned to the rotund Lauritano. His pudgy hands clutched the thick links of the gold watch-chain that stretched across his bare chest.

"The Morellos are my friends," he said, disregarding scowls from the Coney Island men. "If you kill them I will leave Brooklyn."

"They are double-crossers and deserve death," retorted Don Pellegrino.

"I am willing to sleep among them," retorted Lauritano, a dull spot of anger mounting to his cheeks. "They are friendly with us and will do anything we want, especially since we had Joe De Marco killed for them."

The conclusion of this incident was unfortunate for Lauritano. Vollero realized that he recalled how the Brooklyn men had killed off the De Marcos in downtown New York, thus establishing a clear field for the Morello gang to spread out from Harlem. Everyone realized that if the Brooklyn men had not paved the way, the Morellos would still be second-raters.

With this thought in mind, Vollero suddenly reached a decision. "I will go along with Don Pellegrino. We should kill them and get the New York graft for ourselves."

Lauritano's moon-face darkened. He saw that he had lost ground. He made a last appeal.

"I will tell Ricci," he said slowly.

Vollero slapped the table. "We will all tell him." Don Pellegrino and Tony the Shoemaker looked at each other, then nodded.

"Yes, let Ricci decide," they agreed.

At that time Andrea Ricci was a name to be handled with care in the underworld. As killer of the notorious Gesuele Galucci, in whose Harlem murder stable over twenty men held their lives for reasons best known to Gesuele, Ricci held



(Top) Officers hold back the crowd on Navy Street, Brooklyn, after Nicholas Morello fell at the spot marked (1) and Charles Ubriaco at (2)—shot at the mobsters. Ralph Daniello (circle), whose confession led to the rounding up of the racketeers. He fell victim to the ruthless vengeance of gangland

and Tony "the Shoemaker" Patti, of the Coney Island faction; and Alessandro Vollero and Leopoldo Lauritano of Navy Street. The discussion waxed loud and long on the subject of starting a gang war that would eliminate the Sicilian Morellos in favor of the combined forces of the Navy Street and Coney Island gangs.

"We should get rid of those rats," said Don Pellegrino as his heavy fist crashed on the table. "Then New York graft

the balance of power between the rising gangs of the Morellos and Brooklyn men.

Hence when his name was brought into the conversation, both the Coney Island and Navy Street men agreed to let him make the decision. As matters stood, he would decide in the end, anyhow.

Andrea Ricci, whose face was gray, the color of granite, and whose chin, nose, and mouth seemed chiseled out of the hard, unyielding stone, was then in Philadelphia, hiding because the police wanted to question him on a murder. The gang leaders had to go there to consult him.

On September 5th the conference with Ricci was held. His stony face was unmoved as he listened to Don Pellegrino's pleas for his consent and Lauritano's arguments for his refusal to sanction the murder plot.

When they had all finished, his face was hard; his eyes were points of ice.

"On one condition I will consent," he said. "The killings must start within two days and these men must be killed."

He held up his hand.

"Nick Morello and Charles Ubracio to start; then Giuseppe Ferrazzano. After that, if they are not scared off, Steve La Salle, Vincent and Ciro Morello."

As he tolled off the list of six doomed men, he turned down his strong fingers one at a time. Lauritano watched; and his face fell. The others were jubilant. Lauritano announced that he was leaving immediately for Boston, so as to have no part in the murders or the aftermath. Ricci agreed that it would be best for Lauritano to remain out of the picture. After he had left, the others set to work to perfect the details.

Impetuous Don Pellegrino was all for inviting the Morellos to a banquet at Coney Island, starting a fight and killing them on the spot.

"Nothing so crude, my friend," chided Ricci. "Better to murder in a territory where the police cannot get witnesses. I will go to Navy Street and send word to the Morellos that I am going to surrender to the police and want first to talk to them about arrangements. When they come to Brooklyn they can be killed."

"But people will see everything that happens," protested Don Pellegrino.

Vollero waved away the objection. "We know how to take care of witnesses. There will be no trouble."

The upshot of it was that at one o'clock in the morning the conspirators took a train for New York. With them they carried a suitcase loaded with revolvers.

The first inkling on the part of the outside world that something was stirring on Navy Street came the following afternoon, when one of the lesser lights of the gang stopped by the restaurant at Myrtle Avenue, near Raymond Street, to purchase garlic and red peppers.

The proprietor took the order, and twirled his bushy black mustache as he handed over the bag. He said nothing, but he knew what it meant. Garlic and red peppers for Navy Street meant only one thing—some one was going to be put away in short order; for, true to custom in the old country, death bullets were always liberally smeared with an ointment prepared from those vegetables, and wounds made with such bullets had the reputation of never healing.

BACK at Navy Street, Ricci was taking personal charge, giving final instructions to the killers. Chosen for the task were five of the deadliest trigger-men in the business—Alphonse "the Butcher" Sgroia, "Buffalo Mike" Notaro, "Tom the Turk" Pagano, Lefty Esposito and Tom Carillo.

Word had been sent to the Morellos that Ricci wanted to talk to them and they had agreed to send Nicholas Morello and Charles Ubracio over in the morning for a conference.

The plan as laid down by Ricci was for Buffalo Mike and the Butcher to wait in a corner poolroom, with Tom the Turk on the corner of Johnson and Navy Streets, and Esposito and Carillo standing ready in a coffee house nearby. In this way the whole block would be covered.

"When they arrive, Tom the Turk will meet them at the corner and take them to the café. He will buy them a drink and see that they put their guns away in the wall panel. Then he will get them out into the street and—" Ricci passed his hand across his throat—the death sign.

Tom the Turk rubbed a forefinger along the edge of his bluish chin. "How will I get away?"

"You will run through the same yard I did when I shot Frank Grimaldi," said Vollero. "The police never caught me and they won't catch you."

There was one other man assigned to play a part in the next day's drama. He was Ralph Daniello, known as "The Barber."

This man had learned his trade shaving inmates of an insane asylum, while serving a prison term in Italy. While not one of the leaders of the gang, he was well thought of by the others, and was present at most of the important conferences, if only in the background.

"You will remain in the café," Ricci told him, "and as soon as the Morellos enter, offer to buy them a drink. Don't be nervous or let them suspect anything."

Daniello tightened his lips and nodded. His weakness, which had held back his advancement in the gang, was his habit of becoming chalk-white in time of trouble.

"Now," said Ricci as the meeting broke up, "let's all go out for something to eat."

The next morning, September 7th, at nine o'clock, the leaders started to drift to their Navy Street headquarters. Ricci inspected the revolvers and supervised the application of garlic and red peppers to the bullets. When this had been done, he ordered the men to their posts.

There was an air of expectancy in the place as the men filed out. Hardened as they were to crime and murder, there was always an undercurrent of tenseness before a big job, which infected all concerned, and even Ricci's grayish face seemed to have blood beneath the leaden skin.

Not everyone knew what had been decided by the leaders, and two men, Salvatore Costa and Albert Esposito, when they reported to Vollero, were ordered to go to Don Pellegrino Marano's place at Coney Island.

"I sent them away," confided Vollero when they had departed, "because I do not know how far to trust them. One is a Sicilian and the other used to shave the Morellos."

"You did right," agreed Ricci. "There is no need of taking chances. Now let's go across the street and watch from the window of your aunt's house."

Navy Street lay quiet and deserted in the early morning sunlight that streamed down from a cloudless sky. Occasion-



In this secret panel at the headquarters of the Navy Street Gang, the hoodlums concealed their guns. It was from here that one of the six doomed men retrieved his weapon

ally a junkman's cart or a truck filled with merchandise for one of the river warehouses rattled by. On the corner at Johnson Street, loitered Tom the Turk, casually smoking a cigarette. Watching him for the signal he would give when the Morellos were sighted, were a dozen hidden eyes.

Suddenly Tom the Turk was seen to throw his cigarette away and straighten his cap. It was the signal.

He advanced, smiling, toward two nattily dressed men; Morello and Ubriaco. One was wearing a derby and the other a pearl-gray fedora. They shook hands with Tom and followed him to the café at Number 113.

"Where is Ricci?" asked Nick Morello as he pushed his derby hat back on his head and wiped his hands across his brow.

"He'll be over in a minute," Tom the Turk assured him. He opened the door to the café.

MORELLO nodded and followed inside. Ubriaco, whose swarthy face seemed two shades darker than usual under the light gray hat, lingered for a moment on the threshold and cast a customary look behind him. The street was empty and he saw nothing that troubled him.

Ralph the Barber rose from one of the tables as the men entered and greeted them. He walked over to the wall and, with a pressure of his hand, opened a secret trap-door, exposing a closet where the gang members deposited their guns when they entered the café. Nicholas Morello tugged a heavy, silver revolver from his hip pocket and handed it over to Daniello.

"I'm clean," said Ubriaco. "Don't worry about me."

Conversation for Ralph the Barber was, for once, a bit difficult. As soon as the men were seated at the table, he ordered drinks. The monkey-faced man, who was paid by the gang leaders to wait only on them, served up a round of whiskies.

After the drinks had been finished, Tom the Turk, who had been looking repeatedly at his watch, pushed back his chair and rose to his feet.

"It looks as though Ricci isn't coming here. Perhaps we better go to see him. He is staying with Vollero down the street."

Morello and Ubriaco exchanged glances. The latter shrugged. "Okay, we have no time to waste."

Tom the Turk held the door open and the two men hurried past him. Over their shoulders as they passed, he grimaced to Daniello who was standing by the table. The latter saw the door close and held his breath, waiting for the sharp spit of gunfire that would tell him that the execution had begun.

His face was tense, and unconsciously he was leaning forward, straining to hear the message of death. So rapt was his attention that he failed to hear the door open and, when he looked up, there, of all people, stood Nick Morello. He was smiling.

"Er—hello," Ralph the Barber stammered. "What's the matter?"

Morello's voice was silky. "I want my gun—if you don't mind?"

Ralph the Barber's throat was dry—but he managed a mirthless laugh.

"Oh, sure, I forgot."

He opened the trap-door and handed over the silver revolver. Morello, dark shoe-button eyes sparkling in his round face, grinned at him.

"What's the matter with you? You're pale."

Ralph the Barber's skin was chalky. "I don't feel well," he said.

"Have some one examine you," suggested Morello, as he put his gun back on his hip and patted it.

"I will," said the Barber, praying that the other would get out of his sight.

"Coming with us?" asked Morello as he put his hand on the doorknob.

"No, thanks," said the Barber. He sat down on the nearest chair, sweat streaking his face. Morello left.

Outside on the street, the drama raced toward a climax. Tom the Turk, with Morello and Ubriaco, walked toward the corner. Approaching them came Esposito and Carillo, their steps neither hurried, nor slow. They walked as if they knew where they were going. The two groups met in front of the ornate glass front of Costello's saloon, in the middle of the block. Lingering in the background were the stealthy figures of Buffalo Mike and the Butcher.

It was Carillo who fired first. His lightning-like hand whipped out his pistol and he drilled Charles Ubriaco through the heart. Before the man knew what hit him, he was lying in the gutter.

Tom the Turk, who stepped out of the line of fire, opened on Morello. The first shot caught him in the shoulder as he was reaching for his gun. Watching from the upper window, Ricci's gray eyes became suddenly fiery as he saw Morello, left arm clutching his right shoulder, start to run.

"I told them to get Morello first," snapped Ricci. "If he escapes, I'll kill those — myself."

But the Navy Street assassins had no thought of letting their prey escape.

No sooner had Morello started to flee, than Lefty Esposito reached out a claw-like hand and, seizing Morello's necktie and shirt in his fist, pulled the man to him. Morello's eyes popped with terror. He struggled to reach his gun. He kicked at Esposito's legs. Esposito's face went wooden. His trigger finger moved—once—twice—and Morello staggered backwards. As he fell to the street other guns spat flame.

The blast of gunfire lasted but a few seconds, then all was silent. Buffalo Mike and the Butcher, seeing that they were no longer needed, threw their weapons away and ran. Esposito, Carillo and Tom the Turk, followed Vollero's instructions. With coat-tails flying they sped down the narrow alley to safety.

The angry snarl of shots stirred the neighborhood like a boulder flung into a quiet pool. From tenement houses, stores and wooden frame buildings, poured the inhabitants of the district. Terrified negroes thought that a race riot had started and reached for razors.

Patrolman Morris Coon, of the Adams Street Station, heard the gunfire and started toward the sound. When he came to the street it was already crowded by a jostling mob. He paused at the corner long enough to telephone for the station house reserves, and then he pushed his way through the crowd to the center.

Glass was shattered on the sidewalk and the front of Costello's saloon was cracked and jagged with bullet



The lair of the underworld rats, at 113 Navy Street, Brooklyn, New York, as it appears today. Here the murdering hoodlums planned their many nefarious undertakings

holes. Two circles of curious spectators stared wide-eyed at the dead men in the street.

The police reserves came up with a great clanging of patrol car gongs, trilled through the crowd, formed a wall and pushed the curious back from Navy Street.

Detectives Frank Tierney, Michael Mealli, Joseph Buciano, and William Roady of the Sixth Branch Bureau, who had come up with the reserves, set to work. On one body they found a bankbook made out in the name of Nicholas Morello, showing a deposit of \$550 the previous day. There was nothing to identify the second body, so fingerprints were taken while it still lay in the gutter.

A survey of the street yielded three revolvers, which the killers had tossed away. Two were .38 caliber and one was a .32. There were seven unfired cartridges in the three guns.

Detective Mealli kicked at a splinter of glass with his foot and ran his eye over the front of Costello's saloon. He saw bullet holes in the door as well as the window.

"Well," he said, "if they weren't all ducking bullets in there, maybe some one saw what happened."

Inside the saloon, John Costello was leaning on the bar, gazing sadly at the walls, scarred by the flying bullets. When the officers asked for information, he told them that he had been in the back when the shooting started and had seen nothing.

"Three colored fellows here—maybe they help you," he suggested.

"Who were they?"

"One name is Texas. The others Tom Hooper and General Lee Green. Colored people know where they live."

When they heard this, the officers immediately started in search of the men. They knew from experience that any killing in the quarter always resulted in a sudden epidemic of deafness and bad memory on the part of the inhabitants. Sometimes the police and the killers raced to see who would get to the witnesses first.

While they set about making discreet inquiries, the fingerprint records at headquarters disclosed the identity of Charles Ubriaco. Young Ciro Morello, who did not know that he, too, had been marked for death, identified the bodies of the two murdered gangsters at the morgue.

The police knew that Morello and Ubriaco were prominent members of the underworld and that their allies would quickly seek retribution. Hence extra police details were assigned to all the streets of Little Italy, in Harlem, lower Manhattan and Brooklyn, and keen-eyed strangers loitered in convenient hallways and vantage points on the lookout for trouble.

Police Commissioner Arthur Woods, realizing that some one was trying to get the helm of gangster control, made a personal appeal to the people to come to the police with their troubles.

"If the thousands of law-abiding Italians in this city will drop their neutral attitude and cooperate with the police to the extent of giving information when asked, they can quickly render Italian lawlessness a figment of sensational imagination," he said.

But a century-old tradition of silence, that cloaked the comings and goings of killers working for shrewd and cold-eyed men who held their power like robber barons of old, was not one to be lightly discarded. The police got no information of any importance, and working on the theory that the killing was the work of assassins hired by Brooklyn relatives of Don Gesuele to avenge his murder, tireless and

determined officers picked up the threads of the investigation.

Meanwhile the Navy Street Gang was gathering for a victory dinner at the Santa Lucia Hotel at Coney Island.

The slayers, after fleeing, had gone to a rendezvous at 6 Mott Street in the heart of the Chinatown district, and here word had reached them that they were to go to Coney Island for a dinner "in their honor."

Ricci had started back to Philadelphia as soon as the shooting was over, and Lauritano was still in Boston. Aside from these men the roster of the gang was complete, and altogether there were twenty men at the big horseshoe table in the Santa Lucia's most luxurious private dining-room that evening.

The room was a blaze of lights. Shining silver and sparkling cut glass gleamed on the spotless white tablecloth. Attentive waiters passed along the table, pouring pale golden champagne into the diners' glasses. Don Pellegrino, the host, was doing things in fine style.

After the soup was served, the worthy Don rose to his feet, and motioned for silence. All eyes turned toward him. "A toast," he said, lifting his champagne glass high in the air. One of the facets of his diamond ring caught in the light and shot gleams of deep blue and fiery red. Nineteen glasses were raised to eye-level.

"Health to the Neapolitan," said Don Pellegrino. His voice hardened significantly. "Death and destruction to the Sicilians."

In the cheering that followed, some of the men who forgot their manners, stamped their feet and banged on the table with knives and forks.

Wine flowed freely and by the time coffee was served, everyone was in fine fettle. Alessandro Vollero, perspiration trickling down his cheeks, pushed back his chair and walked down the line to where Salvatore Costa and Albert Esposito were sitting.

He put an affectionate arm on each of their shoulders.

"I hope you fellows aren't sore because I sent you away this morning. Now that the job is done I will tell you why. You, Salvatore, and you, Albert, used to work for the Morellos, and I didn't want you to know anything about it."

Costa was on his feet, looking into Vollero's eyes with as much steadiness as he could muster.

"Capo," he said, "if you told me to kill them I would have done it for you. I am with you now and not with them."

Vollero beamed, pleased with the organization, of which he was a *capo* or head man.

WHILE the banquet was in progress, the police were asking many questions along Navy Street. Some one telephoned Coney Island to report that they were searching for Leopoldo Lauritano for questioning. It was known that Lauritano was friendly with the Morellos, and since the killing had taken place in his territory, it was reasoned that he must know something about it.

When Vollero and Don Pellegrino heard of this they indulged in a laugh that brought tears to their eyes.

"Poor Poldo, he wanted to get out of trouble," said Vollero, chuckling. "Now he is the first one the police think of. Tell the detectives that we will take care of the business. I'll telegraph to Boston and have him give himself up."

When Vollero had finished giving instructions to the man who would drop the hint to the police that Lauritano would soon be in their hands, he spied "Ralph the Barber" Daniello, who had paled on hearing the conversation.



Ciro Morello, better known as Ciro Terranova, who was on Andrea Ricci's list of the doomed

"What's the matter with that milk face of yours? Why don't you go to the bridge and throw yourself in the river?"

Ralph the Barber smiled weakly. Vollero clapped a hand to his shoulder. "Listen to me," he said. "Everything is going to be okay. You get in to Ferraro and see that everything is fixed."

Ferraro was contact man for the gang. It was he who acted as go-between in the deals between the underworld and the politicians, and a word from him would insure proper treatment of Lauritano. Once he had arranged for delivery of a prisoner it was certain that only strictly legal evidence would be used against the man.

When Ralph the Barber left on his mission, Vollero returned to the table to partake of a special *zabaglione* that had been freshly made for him by the manager.

Vollero was half-way through the tasty dish when one of the underlings tapped him on the shoulder to tell him that Navy Street was calling again. Scowling with annoyance, he pulled the napkin from his chin and went to the telephone.

"Capo, they want you," said an awe-stricken voice at the other end.

"Who wants me?" demanded Vollero.

"The police."

Vollero grinned. "Tell them I have a date to go to the Mardi Gras tonight. I'll surrender in the morning."

When he returned to the table, Don Pellegrino and Tony the Shoemaker came over to inquire about the call.

"It's the police. I told them I'd see them tomorrow. But first I want some one to see Louis the Nigger—to fix the witnesses."

"I'll attend to it," volunteered Tony the Shoemaker.

Vollero mumbled thanks from a mouth full of *zabaglione*.

So, while Vollero and the others of the gang continued the merry-making at the Mardi Gras festival, Tony the Shoemaker headed back to Navy Street. He sought out the power behind the scenes in the life of the colored population, a man known as Louis the Nigger, chief of the razor fighters. The latter, coal-black, and six feet tall, ruled his part of the world, and when it was in his interest, he knew everybody's business. He promised that neither Vollero nor any one else need fear identification from any colored man who might have been on the scene.

The next morning, true to his word, Alessandro Vollero, somewhat red-eyed from loss of sleep, gave himself up. Meanwhile, Ferraro, the contact man, had been busy, and no sooner was Vollero in custody than he was under the sheltering wing of a lawyer.

Vollero was lodged in the detention cell at Headquarters until the afternoon, when he was brought upstairs to a detective squad room.

He was told to stand against the wall, and then a group of masked men entered. Some were white men, and by their build Vollero judged they were detectives. The others were colored—their clothes were shabby, their shoes worn. They wore black masks that covered their entire faces, to shield their identity and prevent retribution. But they knew whatever they said would go back to Louis the Nigger, and most of them were too frightened to talk. But even if they could talk—Vollero's face meant nothing to them. It was not he whom they had seen in front of Costello's the previous day.

When they failed to make an identification, Vollero was sent back to the detention cell and from there transferred to the Tombs, while the authorities tried to build a case

against him. A day passed and then Vollero sent for Don Pellegrino.

"Get me out of here," he told his associate.

"Ferraro wants \$250 to spring you—it will take another day to get cash."

"I won't stay another night," swore Vollero. He looked at Don Pellegrino and saw his diamond ring. "Pawn that," he said, pointing to the gem.

Don Pellegrino frowned, spluttered protests. Vollero was adamant. Pellegrino pulled the ring from his fat finger. A few hours later, Vollero left jail.

THEN followed one of the most amazing exhibitions of brazen contempt ever flaunted in the face of the law. With the witnesses completely terrorized, Vollero sent to Philadelphia for Ricci and to Boston for Lauritano. He arranged for their surrender, and the same procedure repeated with them soon resulted in their release for lack of evidence. Ricci was detained for questioning on the De Marco murders, but was soon released as the authorities could make no case.

Tony Paretti, Ralph the Barber, Tom the Turk, the Butcher and Buffalo Mike were turned over to the police and released in short order. Within two weeks more than half the gang passed in and out of the Tombs, and none was the worse for wear.

The Navy Street Gang was now set to dispose of the remaining Morelos and then reap the fruits of their criminal enterprise.

On October 6th, one month after the first outbreak of warfare, Giuseppe Ferrazzano left Conti's Restaurant at 341 Broome Street after a meal of spaghetti and Chianti, and stood on the sidewalk for a moment to breathe the crisp autumn air and clear his head. His back was toward the restaurant and he did not see the ugly muzzles of two revolvers pointed at a spot between his shoulder blades. Two jets of flame flashed from the weapons. Giuseppe Ferrazzano plunged into the gutter.

That night Buffalo Mike Nataro and Butcher Sgroi were the recipients of congratulations from their fellow human rats.

Alarmed at the killing of the third key man in their gang, the Morelos realized that they had to retreat or be wiped out. They drew in their lines from downtown Manhattan and went back to Harlem.

Within a week the Navy Street men opened a gambling house at 167 Hester Street and settled down to the serious business of collecting tribute money from the new territory.

They concentrated on four principal sources of revenue. The first and most lucrative was the *zicconetta* graft, which was a peculiar card game played by the Italians. There were four established bosses running the *zicconetta* games, and they were told that they would have to pay \$1,000 a month apiece to the new rulers. They protested that it was too much, and Vollero decided that he would allow them to pay \$150 a week. When he told this to his confederates, they were furious.

"You work too cheap," said Tony the Shoemaker bitterly. "Just because you make plenty of money, you think the rest of us will work like you do. Well, we won't."

Tony Paretti's eyes were burning hot. The others backed up his statements. Blandly, Vollero soothed them, and arranged for a compromise where the Navy Street leaders would get sixty per cent of the gambling game profits.

The second source of graft was (*Continued on page 52*)



Anthony Paretti (right) is pictured during his trial. He is with Deputy Sheriff Frank Holler.



The Maid REMEMBERS A KILLER

ELMER COX, war veteran and postal employee, living at 1116 Forty-seventh Street, Sacramento, California, dropped his newspaper when he heard feet pounding on the front porch of his home.

"Help! Help!"

The feminine voice was succeeded by a violent hammering on the threshold across the room.

"Why, hello, Mary," he said, recognizing Mary Mendonca, the maid in the home of his next door neighbor, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Durkee, as he jerked the door open.

The maid, frightened and almost hysterical, stumbled over the threshold.

"There's a burglar in the house," she gasped, "and I'm all alone."

Called to his stepson, 21-year-old Vernon Derr, and a young companion, Ernest Reynolds, and went to a bedroom. He returned with a revolver and a flashlight.

"Take this," he said to Derr, "and go to the rear of the house. Don't take any chances. If you see anything, shout to me. Come on, Mary—we'll go in the front door."

The four started out, Cox and the maid heading for the

front of the Durkee residence, on the fringe of the most exclusive residential section in Sacramento. The two young men slipped quietly toward the rear.

"Now, tell me about it," Cox said. "Where did you hear the burglar?"

"I was sitting in the living-room, reading," Miss Mendonca replied. "I was thinking, I guess, of something, I can't remember what or other I was nervous. I thought I was imagining things when I heard a scraping noise in the rear part of the house. But then I heard some footsteps, and what sounded like some one pulling open a drawer in a dresser in the back bedroom.

"I didn't wait for anything else. I tore out of the front door and ran over to your house."

They hesitated before the door of the Durkee home, and Cox said:

"We'll go in quietly and you show me where you think you heard the noise."

They tiptoed into the living-room and turned in the direction of the long hall, off which the three bedrooms opened. Miss Mendonca went first. Cox, holding his gun ready, was at her side. They entered the hall and the maid switched on the light. There was no one else in the hall.

By Chief of Detectives W. A. THOMAS

The Durkee residence in a fashionable section of Sacramento, where, on a tragic January night, a callous murder was perpetrated. (Left) Chief of Detectives W. A. Thomas, co-author, examines the ground to which the fleeing gunman leaped

"That man is the killer," declared Mary Mendonca (right), the only witness to the fatal shooting, as she identified the phantom two and a half years after the crime. Her excellent memory proved unfortunate for the young murderer

Mary stepped over to the first bedroom and flipped the switch. With a gasp of surprise and fright, she jumped back.

There, in the room, only a pace or two away, his left hand against the jamb of a closet door and his right holding an automatic pistol, stood a youthful burglar with a hard, cruel mouth and jutting chin.

Cox sprang at the same time, and stepped forward.

"Put up your hands," he ordered, pointing his gun at the burglar's chest.

A streak of flame and a deafening report answered him as the youth, leaning nonchalantly against the closet-door jamb, fired.

The war veteran slumped to the floor. His gun slipped from his hand. "Please—please don't shoot me again," he begged.

The burglar replied with another shot, which struck Cox in the right shoulder.

The victim raised his arm as though to shield his face. A third bullet struck his hand. The maid stood, petrified, watching the streaks of flame and hearing the repeated reports of the gun.

A fourth shot went wild.

Young Derr and Reynolds, attracted by the shots and confident Cox had cornered the burglar, rushed to the front door and into the house. As they approached the wounded man, lying in the hallway, he gasped:

"Get out of here—get out. He'll shoot you, too!"

Derr and Reynolds ran to the Cox home to telephone the police and the fire department.

The burglar pointed his gun at the maid, who was shrinking against the wall. A deadly stillness descended. Then, without a word, the intruder spun to a window, slipped over the frame, dropped to the ground and disappeared in the misty darkness, leaving his footprints in the mud of a flower bed next to the house.

Mary Mendonca was slumped in a near-faint when Derr reached her.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, seizing her by the shoulders. She shook her head and began to weep hysterically.

Cox, on the hall floor, moaned.

* * *

That was the story I heard when, accompanied by two other detectives, I hurried into the Durkee home.

Police Department, Sacramento, California
As told to HEYWOOD HUGHES

Radio patrol cars had preceded me to the neighborhood. Sirens had shattered the stillness of the night. Patrol cars and a police ambulance had skidded on the wet pavement as they sped to the scene. I was close behind them. Curious residents were assembling from all directions as I jumped out of the car.

Cox, weakened by the wounds, was unable to talk when the ambulance attendants lifted him carefully onto a stretcher, then into the car and streaked away to the Sutter Hospital.

Miss Mendonca, on the verge of collapse, told me what she could of the events of the evening; about the appearance of the youthful gunman and the clothing he wore. She said she would recognize him if she ever saw him again. While I questioned the maid, others of the force patrolled the neighborhood, searching for the gunman and questioning neighbors.

No one reported seeing the youth fleeing after the shooting.

John Crump, Assistant Superintendent of the Police Criminal Identification Bureau, obtained numerous finger-prints, the best being the tip of the little finger of a left hand, found on the casing of the closet door.

WE were confident this was a print left by the gunman as he lounged against the door and fired cold-bloodedly at his victim.

Roger Green, of the State Bureau of Criminal Identification, made plaster casts of the footprints in the mud, under the bedroom window. It was evident the thug had entered the house by removing a screen from a back bedroom window. He escaped from the room nearest the parlor.

From Miss Mendonca, we obtained and recorded a description of the gunman: five feet, ten inches tall; weight, about 160; wavy brown hair; rather large brown eyes; hard, cruel mouth and prominent chin; nineteen to twenty-two years of age; dressed in dark slacks with a jacket to match; no hat.

This description was broadcast throughout the state. After all possible clues had been gathered at the Durkee home, I advised Miss Mendonca to go to bed, try to sleep and, in the morning, to think of everything she could in connection with the tragedy. I wanted the closest possible description of the gunman. I had a hunch we might have a tough case to crack.

If he was a local burglar, we could find him. We had underworld sources of information upon which we could rely in cases of that kind—stool-pigeons. If he was an outsider, we faced plenty of trouble trying to run him down.

Inspector Walter Nelson was placed in charge of the case. Others assigned to it included myself, then a member of the plainclothes detail; Acting Captain Alec McAllister, now Sacramento's Chief of Police; Sergeant Perry C. Gamble, now Special Investigator of the Detective Bureau and Assistant Chief of Detectives; Sergeants Ray Peart and Lee Parker, and Detectives M. W. Linecum and Ray Kunz.

The information we had gathered during our investigation of numerous burglaries now came in handy. There had been a run of burglaries that winter, and although we had watched certain groups of second-story workers we had not made many arrests, because we sought the fence—the receiver of the stolen goods.

Now, however, the orders went out to bring in all suspects. That night, we started the roundup.

We arrested Roy Woodford and Frank Remando, ex-convicts; Angelo Rossi, lately out of McNeil Island, and Edmund Scholl. These four, we knew, worked together on burglaries. In Rossi's apartment we found more than \$3,000 worth of clothing and jewelry taken in recent robberies. In Woodford's we located considerable more loot.

Scholl answered the description of a man seen in the vicinity of the crime. Remando's footprints tallied almost exactly with those found under the bedroom window. He corresponded, in many details, with the description of the gunman.



Elmer Cox (above), World War veteran, shot down by the mysterious gunman as he valiantly endeavored to protect his neighbor's property

(Left) In this bedroom in the Durkee home a sinister figure stood, his gun leveled. Suddenly he fired, and Elmer Cox fell, mortally wounded

We picked up Bert Lathrop, another member of the Remando gang; Mrs. Lathrop, Myrtle Rossi and William Pine.

Woodford admitted participating in burglaries, but all denied any part in the Cox shooting. Woodford insisted he and his partners did not work that way. They operated together, always using an automobile. One would slip up to a house and ring the door bell. If no one answered, he would go to the rear, force a window, and enter. Then he would open another window and the back door, and go to the front and open that door.

THIS would be the signal for the others, cruising the block, to enter. They would park the car in front of the house, leave the engine running, and stroll in through the front entrance. They then would gather what suitcases they could find and hurriedly load them with everything—clothing, silverware, jewelry, weapons—anything that might have some value. Then they would rush out by the front door, jump into the car and drive away. The entire process would take only a few minutes.

"You know that's the way we operate," Remando told me. "You can't pin this one on us."

We weren't so sure. Some of the officers believed that in Remando we had the Cox slayer.

I went to the Durkee home the following morning and took Miss Mendonca to Police Headquarters. There, after questioning her again concerning the appearance of the gunman, I told her I wanted her to look at the suspects in the police line-up.

We went into the room where, under bright lights, a dozen men—all about five feet, ten inches tall—stood in a row. Two officers, at peep holes behind the men, watched Miss Mendonca. The maid's eyes traveled along the line. Each time they would stop at Remando. As though sensing our thoughts, she said:

"That man does look like the gunman, but he isn't the one.



(Above) Chief of Police Alec McAllister, of Sacramento, who, as Acting Captain, did outstanding work on the seemingly unsolvable case, inspects window through which the nocturnal intruder entered

(Right) A member of the State Bureau of Identification compares a plaster cast of the phantom's footprint with the shoe of one of the many suspects who were questioned during the investigation

I know you think he's the one who did it, but he is not the man. When I see that man, I shall know him."

Cox, in the hospital, was unable to help. He could not talk. He died January 7th, four days after the shooting, and his death intensified the search for his killer.

The newspapers were hounding us. This murder in a fine family, in an exclusive neighborhood, attracted widespread attention. Cox had been popular. A war veteran, he had served as a postal clerk for eighteen years. He was a member of the American Legion and of the Improved Order of Red Men. The American Legion demanded the capture of his slayer and offered to help. His friends, and those of his wife, Nadine, and his stepchildren, Vernal and Eleanor Derr, added their pleas to the insistent demand that we do something.

We did everything possible. The roundup continued. Every suspected house burglar was arrested for questioning and we recovered more than \$15,000 worth of articles stolen from East Sacramento homes. It was the greatest burglary roundup drive in the history of the city.

Among those brought in for quizzing were Fred Felix, James Kelley and Ernest Martinez, suspected safe blowers; Alfred Armando and Lester Rust, in whose hotel room we found a gun and jewelry from three homes; Manuel Villanueva and Frank Lopez.

The day after Cox died, Remando aroused new suspicion by staging what appeared to be an epileptic fit in his cell in the city jail. He was removed to the emergency hospital under guard of four officers. Dr. George O'Brien examined him and said he was faking.

"What's the matter, Frank?" asked Acting Captain McAllister. "Do you feel the rope around your neck?"

The man forgot his illness. He sat up in bed and cursed.

"You'll never get a rope around my neck!"

He was returned to his cell.

We believed he conceived the epileptic fit as a possible

means of escape. McAllister previously had received information that the prisoner planned to feign illness in order to get into the emergency hospital, saying, "If I ever get out there, I'll make a break if it costs me my life."

Remando tried to establish an alibi in connection with the Cox shooting by saying he was with a young woman friend at the time of the burglary. The girl, however, blasted that by telling us he did not meet her until at least fifteen minutes after the shooting.

Because of the many developments centering upon Remando, some of the officers were confident they had the killer. I was just as confident he was not the man. My conversations with Miss Mendonca had convinced me she would know the thug if she ever saw him, and she insisted Remando was not the one we wanted.

Two .32 automatics were found in Woodford's cache. They were examined by Roger Green, the State Identification Bureau ballistics expert, but neither was the murder weapon. Although Remando's footprints tallied almost exactly with those found under the bedroom window, his heel prints were slightly larger, and that seemed definitely to eliminate him from the list of suspects.

"Find the gun," said McAllister, "and we'll solve the case."

We tested every .32 pistol we found on transients and suspects. We checked the records of second-hand stores. But we did not find the weapon that was used in the killing.

We questioned residents of the neighborhood who reported seeing a youth resembling the one described by Miss Mendonca. Don Smith, superintendent of the Sacramento Municipal Airport, had seen a prowler a few nights before the shooting. The prowler resembled the one we wanted. Fifteen minutes after he was seen by Smith he was spotted by Mrs. Bert Warren as he fled from her porch when she turned on the light in response to the door bell.

But we failed to find any trace of the youth after he leaped out of the Durkee window and disappeared in the darkness.

As time wore on, Kelley, Felix and Martinez were sentenced to Folsom Prison for safe blowing. The Lathrop and Rossi women were released. Rust and Armando were returned to the Ione School of Industry, from which institution they were on parole when gathered in by the police dragnet. Pine was sent to Stockton, California, and there convicted of burglary.

Scholl was sent to San Quentin Prison as a probation violator. He had been sentenced there on a burglary charge, but won probation and was enjoying his conditional freedom when arrested with Woodford, Remando and Rossi. He drew a new sentence of from one to fifteen years.

ON January 31st, Remando, Lathrop and Woodford appeared before Superior Judge Martin I. Welsh, pleaded guilty to second-degree burglary charges and were sentenced to Folsom. This took place after all efforts had failed to connect Remando with the Cox killing.

Judge Welsh later rescinded his order and sent Lathrop to San Quentin Prison, because the burglar pleaded with deputy sheriffs to be separated from Remando, a former prizefighter, whom he feared would kill him if they were placed together in Folsom. There was bad blood between the two. Lathrop said Remando had threatened to kill him on sight. To this, Remando muttered:

"There's nothing to it."

But they were separated.

Rossi was found guilty and also was sentenced to Folsom. The other suspects were released.

And then the activities in regard to the Cox case quieted down. I felt that sometime we would find the killer, but meanwhile the slaying was placed in the records as an unsolved case.

From time to time during the next two years, we picked up a suspect, but in each instance the maid, Miss Mendonca, after viewing him, said, "No, that is not the man."

* * *

Late in June, 1938, we were electrified by our first good break in the case. It came unexpectedly and from a source that often plays an important part in solving mysterious crimes.

We received an anonymous note, obviously written by an ex-convict, and mailed in a small mining camp in the Mother Lode section of California.

The scrawled note, postmarked at Diamond Spring, told us that a San Quentin convict named William Smith, employed in the captain's office, knew something about a murder in Sacramento, January 3rd, 1936!

The note, received by Chief McAllister, who turned it over to me, galvanized the detective force into action.

Written on cheap tablet paper, it read:

Sacramento Police Dept.

Chief of Police

I am writing this to you as I am not in favor of killing people.

There is a man in San Quentin named Wm Smith who works in the Capt's office as a runner who knows something about the murder in Sacramento about Jan. 3rd 1936. He told me about it while I was confined in the joint so I am telling it along to you. He is in for a burglary rap.

Hope you lots of luck—I won't sign my name, but some day I may drop in & identify myself.

Immediately we started tracing the writer. Undercover men and detectives went to the mining camp and began making inquiries and observing the residents. Diamond Spring is no more than a village, and we had little difficulty



The telltale print of a left little finger (insert), found on the jamb of a closet door, is compared with the print of the accused man recorded at San Quentin

locating the writer. One of the undercover men mingled with the workmen coming off shift at a small gold mine and asked about the chances of getting a job. He was told the chances were slim; that the turnover there did not amount to much.

One miner let fall the remark that a man hired a week before was the first new person taken on at the mine in a long time.

"Who is he?" asked the undercover operator.

"Nobody knows much about him," the miner replied. "He's a quiet sort of guy. That's him over there."

He pointed to a man, in dirty working clothes, walking

by himself only a short distance away.

The undercover operator thanked his informant, and casually strolled in the direction taken by the other man, who went to a small, weather-beaten cabin on the edge of the town.

About that time, I arrived in Diamond Spring, having driven there to see what luck my men were having.

The undercover man strolled up to my car, which he had spotted at a service station only a hundred yards from the new miner's cabin, and told me what he had learned.

I drove to the cabin, stopped my machine in front and walked to the door of the place. As I knocked I heard water splashing; then silence. Presently, there was the sound of slow footsteps approaching the door. A man, his face dripping wet, opened the door a few inches and peered at me.

"What do you want?" he asked.

I was confident he was the person we sought. There is something about prisons that leaves a stamp on a man. I cannot describe what that stamp is, but I can usually spot an ex-convict when I see one. This fellow had the mark.

"I want to talk to you," I said.

"I ain't done nothing," he retorted, hesitant to open the door.



The callous, sneering young murderer, whose desire to do away with the only witness to his crime led to his apprehension after a brilliant homicide inquiry

"I don't want you for anything," I replied. "I just want to talk to you."

He looked at me for a moment, then stepped aside and I entered the cabin. He walked across the room and dried his face on a towel. He had been cleaning up after a day in the mine. When he turned toward me again, I took the anonymous note from my pocket and told him who I was.

"You wrote this, didn't you?" I asked, as I held it before him.

He just looked at me.

"I merely want to get some more information about the

man you mentioned in this note. You may be able to help us crack a hard case, and it won't hurt you to cooperate with us."

A glint of fear showed in his eyes. He was afraid of gangland vengeance.

"So far as we're concerned," I told him, "no one will ever know you gave us any information."

I realized how important it was to keep his name hidden. Undoubtedly there are one or two convicts, including the slayer himself, who suspect the identity of the man who, in prison parlance, "turned rat" and squealed on a former companion. If that man's name became known generally, the finger of the underworld would be upon him and he would not have long to live. He violated the code of criminals, and he would have to pay—with his life—if found—because he performed a courageous and commendable act in the cause of justice.

The ex-convict's tension eased. He began to talk.

Some time before he was paroled, he told me, his cellmate in San Quentin had confided in him. Smith, the cellmate, told him about killing a man in Sacramento during a burglary in 1936, and said the maid in the house had seen him and witnessed the slaying.

"THIS guy wanted the maid rubbed out," the ex-convict confided. "He was afraid that as long as she lived, she might spot his picture and connect him with the murder. He made me promise to take the girl on a one-way ride. I promised, all right, before I got out. But I don't want nothing to do with any killing. That's why I tipped you off."

The ex-convict said his cellmate told him the date of the murder, the name of the maid and the location of the Durkee home. He also mentioned the name of the victim, Cox. He confided that information when the man who was to be paroled promised to "do a little job" and help a cellmate out of a spot by eliminating the one witness who might in the future point at him and say: "That man is the killer!"

The Cox slayer was afraid of the maid. He felt she alone, stood between him and freedom from suspicion in connection with the crime.

We obtained from San Quentin Prison the fingerprints and pictures of our informant's former cellmate, Smith, who worked as a runner, or messenger, in the captain's office.

We withdrew from the files the left little finger print, taken from the closet door jamb in the Durkee residence the night of the Cox shooting. We compared it with the prints obtained from San Quentin and they matched perfectly!

I telephoned Miss Mendonca on June 21st.

"I think we have a good lead on the Cox murder," I told her. "I'm coming right out. It may be the break we've been waiting for, these two years."

As I got into the car, I hoped we were nearing the end of the long trial. When I reached the Durkee residence—the family had moved since the slaying—I found the maid waiting for me. She appeared excited.

"I am going to outline the circumstances to you," I said; "then I shall give you several pictures of criminals. The murderer's picture may be among them. I want you to see if you recognize any of the men in the pictures."

I told her about the anonymous letter; how we had located the ex-convict; how the paroled man had been entrusted with the job of killing the maid.

"Oh, but what shall I do?" Miss Mendonca interrupted, frightened showing in her eyes.

"You need not be afraid," I told her. "This ex-convict promised to find you and eliminate you, but that will not happen. You must realize, of course, that you are the only living person who saw the Cox slayer; who can point him out to a jury. If you were out of the way, his chances of escaping the noose or a life sentence in prison would be greatly enhanced. You are the key witness in this case. Are you ready to go ahead with your part of it?"

"Oh, of course I am," she replied fervently. "I want you to find the man who killed poor Mr. Cox. I shall be happy if I can play a part in his conviction."

I told her about our investigation, about the information obtained from the ex-convict, about the fingerprints matching. Then, I said:

"I have eight pictures here. Look at them. See if you recognize any of them."

Mary Mendonca's eyes gleamed as she reached for the pictures—front and side view shots (*Continued on page 64*)

BROKEN BODIES

EXPOSING NEW YORK'S INSURANCE RACKET

By ALAN HYND
Special Investigator for
MASTER DETECTIVE

The Story Thus Far:

IN New York City, Attorney Joseph J. Weiss and his confederates, Dr. Hirsch L. Messman and Martin Gross, are making easy money by defrauding insurance companies through fake disability claims. Gross, the Chaser, has persuaded, first Benjamin Nelson, then Morris Spitz and Herman Berger, who hold thousands of dollars' worth of insurance bearing disability clauses, to fall in with the scheme. Messman gives the "Human Guinea Pigs" a drug which accelerates the heart action.

Taken to hospitals, the three men deceive eminent physicians and, later, insurance company doctors into believing them permanently ill of heart trouble. They have, however, been surreptitiously taking the digitalis pills ordered by Dr. Messman. Weiss and his associates receive a split of the money paid out to the "disabled" men.

Then, in April, 1937, Ben Nelson, examined by Dr. Master, noted heart specialist, and consulting physician for the Equitable Life Assurance Society, Master becomes suspicious. His knowledge of heart reactions tells him that Nelson is faking. His report to Government officials is read with interest by United States Attorney Lamar Hardy, his assistants, John Dailey, Jr., and Irving Kaufman, and Postal Inspectors James Doran, Frank Sheas and Samuel McLennan. An investigation is launched.

Learning that Weiss is the man behind the gigantic fraud, Sheas arranges for the attorney's telephones to be tapped, and all conversations taken down as well as reproduced on phonograph records. Payments on several policies are stopped, and the insured men asked to come for another examination by company doctors. Nelson fails to appear at the office of the Prudential company as scheduled. Weiss explains that his client is too ill to leave his home. But relatives, trailing the conspirators, learn that Nelson, Spitz and twelve other policyholders, who are being paid from \$500 to \$800 a month for total disability, are spending most of their time in brokers' offices.

"Mr. Hardy," declares Inspector Doran, to the United States Attorney, "we are certainly finding out some amazing things about this fraud ring, and we've only begun."

(Center) The United States Courthouse, at Foley Square, New York City, where the ringleaders of the most astounding swindle of its kind in the history of criminology were tried. (Far right) Assistant United States Attorneys Irving Kaufman (left) and John F. Dailey, Jr. They did remarkable work in smashing the fraud ring



Dr. George Krupp (above), who attested to the fact that one of the "Human Guinea Pigs" was suffering from an incurable heart malady, was brought into the case in an amazing manner



The Story Concludes:

PART VI

POSTAL INSPECTOR DORAN went on to detail to United States Attorney Hardy how investigators, working under Inspectors Samuel McLennan and Frank Shea, had, by hasty and preliminary investigation, convinced themselves that a dozen friends of Ben Nelson and Morris Spitz were, like Nelson, collecting on permanent disability claims. Yet, to all surface appearances, the men were as fit in health if they had just passed insurance examinations.

"For one thing," Inspector Doran told Mr. Hardy, "every one of these men, in the short time that it has been possible for Shea, McLennan and the others to observe them, has been seen doing at least one thing that an individual suffering from a serious heart condition just never does.

"Most of them have been seen smoking. Several of them have been spotted drinking in bars near the brokerage houses where they congregate, apparently with no thought of limiting themselves to any specified number of drinks. Others have been observed hurrying as fast as they could to make subway connections on their way home at night, and some of them have even been seen running and going up subway stairs two at a time. No, the activities of those men just don't point to heart trouble."

Doran said that the investigation by Shea and McLennan was just getting under way, and that there had not been sufficient time to thoroughly delve into the various avenues of investigation that unquestionably led from the brokerage office.

"Aside from the men of whom we already were suspicious, and who led us to the brokerage office in the first place," said the Inspector, "we have spotted exactly twelve we are sure are involved in fraud against the insurance companies. But when we have had time to check the friends of those men, there's no telling how many we'll uncover."

In the meantime, the seemingly far-flung swindle area was being probed from other angles—among them a checkup in the offices

of the various big insurance companies of all policies that had become inactive during the previous two years by virtue of the holders being adjudged permanently disabled.

The idea was to look into all such insured persons and ascertain whether they had any connection with the ring. Thus the authorities were entering the house of fraud from both the back door and the front door, with others watching the windows. It seemed highly improbable that any one who had been involved in dishonest insurance dealings within a time recent enough to offer fresh, presentable evidence, would escape eventual punishment.

By means of investigating both individuals and records, two names appeared on the probe horizon—those of Dr. George Krupp, of 220 East 157th Street, the Bronx, and Dr. Maximilian Goldstein, of 829 Park Avenue. At the very outset, both of these physicians looked like very promising subjects for investigation. Dr. Krupp's reputation left something to be desired, he being at the moment at liberty under \$5,000 bail on a charge, filed against him in March, 1937, of manslaughter arising out of an alleged criminal operation case. The name of Dr. Goldstein, a medico with an excellent reputation as a heart specialist, and not really to be mentioned in the same breath as Krupp, appeared on several of the insurance applications for permanent disability, and therefore caused raised official eyebrows.

Not only that, but it now became clear to the listeners-in on the wire telephone leading into the offices of Attorney Joseph J. Weiss and Dr. John L. Master, suspected of being two of the ringleaders of the gigantic hoodlum, the frequent references to "Doe K" or "George" meant Dr. Krupp, and "the Park Avenue Doe" or "Dr. Max" meant Goldstein. Krupp had been one of the outside physicians who had, on Morris Spitz' pending applications with several insurance companies for permanent disability allowances, attested to the fact that the Bronx policyholder was suffering from an incurable heart malady. Dr. Goldstein had made an electrocardiograph of Ben Nelson, and had also performed the same service for others. But because the Nelson and Spitz claims were obviously frauds, that did not necessarily make Krupp and Goldstein guilty.

The business of doping up a claimant with digitals, which greatly accelerated the action of the heart, and which had first been suspected by an insurance physician upon examining Nelson several weeks previously, (*Continued on page 54*)



WANTED!

FOR BANK ROBBERY AND MURDER



\$100 REWARD

MASTER DETECTIVE will pay \$100 reward under the usual Line-Up conditions, for the tip leading to the apprehension of Raymond Duvall (pictured here). His description follows: Aliases, Forrest Bishop, "Whitney," "Red" Bishop, Age, 30; height, 5 feet, 10 inches; weight, 150 pounds; build, medium; eyes, blue; hair, chestnut red; complexion, ruddy. If located, hold and wire J. Edgar Hoover, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D. C., or Line-Up Editor, MASTER DETECTIVE, 122 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. 22 M 1 R 110 14

F. P. C.

L 1 Rr 111 16

MASTER DETECTIVE OFFERS
\$100 REWARD
FOR THE CAPTURE OF
RAYMOND DUVALL, Fugitive Bandit-Killer

RAYMOND DUVALL, the man whose likeness you see on this page and on the cover of this magazine, is one of the most-sought criminals in the country.

He is wanted for murder, extortion and bank robbery.

In February, 1938, he dropped from sight and since then his whereabouts has been a mystery. If, after a careful study of his features, you recognize him, perhaps masquerading under an alias, do not hesitate to notify John Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D. C., or the Editor of MASTER DETECTIVE. For, should your identification of this photograph supply the information which leads directly to his capture, you will qualify for the \$100 Line-Up reward offered in accordance with the terms printed on page 49.

Duvall's first brush with the law came in August, 1933, when he was arrested by the police of Indianapolis, Indiana, charged with trespassing. He was then a well-built youth of twenty-five with a shock of chestnut red hair and slightly drooping eyes. Since it was his first offense, charges were dismissed. Two weeks later, on September 6th, he was picked

up for a traffic violation. Again the authorities were lenient and the charges were dropped.

For the next two years Duvall kept out of trouble. Then, on January 31st, 1935, he took to car stealing. On his first attempt he was caught red-handed, driving a stolen vehicle along a country road, by an alert Indiana State Police officer. Convicted of vehicle taking, he was sentenced to pay \$25 and costs, and serve six months at the State Farm at Greencastle. Released in September, 1935, he hid out for almost a year, but the summer of 1936 found him becoming more and more of a police character. In June, he was picked up for vagrancy, in July for burglary, and in August for vagrancy again. However, none of these charges could be made to stick, and it was not long thereafter that he went in for crime in a more serious way.

Forming a friendship with Leonard C. Jackson, a parolee from the State Reformatory, who had been jailed at the age of twenty-two for grand larceny, they set about to do what they considered a big-time job.

Having obtained two revolvers, it was Jackson who formed the scheme. "No need of us casing (Continued on page 67)

By RICHARD HIRSCH

Ninety-three Captures To Date—\$12,825 Rewards Paid

Master Detective

LINE-UP

March, 1939

WATCH FOR THESE FUGITIVES



HENRY BROWN, Alias, Boone. Escaped Federal Prisoner. Reward: MASTER DETECTIVE, \$100. Age, 32; height, 5 feet, 7 inches; weight, 130 pounds; eyes, blue; hair, brown; complexion, ruddy; build, slender. *Tattoos:* Girl on right arm; bird on left hand. *If located,* wire J. E. Hoover, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D. C.

F. P. C. O 32 W IMM 16
F. P. C. 1 32 W OII



ASSON GRAVES PUR-CHASE. Forgery. Reward: MASTER DETECTIVE, \$100; other rewards, \$200. Age, 46; height, 5 feet, 5 inches; weight, 145 pounds; hair, brown turning gray at the sides; eyes, brown; front teeth poor and irregular; sloppy dresser. *If located,* wire Detective Thomas Kenney, 111th Police Precinct, Bayside, Long Island, N. Y.

F. P. C. (10) 21 W MM 12



ROY KELLEY. Escaped Murderer. Reward: MASTER DETECTIVE, \$100; authorities, \$25. Age, 35; height, 5 feet, 6½ inches; weight, 145 pounds; hair and eyes, black; complexion, dark brown; build, good; teeth, bad. Occupation, farmer and laborer. *If located,* wire State Convict Department, Montgomery, Alabama.

F. P. C. 12 W M 9



GEORGE CRONIN. Aliases, Mansfield Thompson. Murder. Reward: MASTER DETECTIVE, \$100. Age, 40; height, 5 feet, 9 inches; weight, 183 pounds; hair, medium brown; eyes, gray-blue; right ring finger badly scarred. Confidence man using three-cornered card game method. *If located,* wire Chief of Detectives Henry W. Piel, Police Department, Detroit, Mich.

F. P. C. 9 S 1 A II 3
F. P. C. S 1 Tr II 3



KIRK BORDERS. Fur- lough Violator. Reward: MASTER DETECTIVE, \$100. Age, 36; height, 5 feet, 7 inches; weight, 135 pounds; hair, dark brown; eyes, green; complexion, fair; large cut scar on back of left hand, making hand semi-deformed. Occupation, auto mechanic. *If located,* wire Bureau of Records and Identification, Texas Prison System, Huntsville, Texas.

F. P. C. (22) 1 U OOO 15
F. P. C. 1 U OOO 13



WILL BIGBY. Murder. Reward: MASTER DETECTIVE, \$100. Age, 49; height, 5 feet, 10½ inches; weight, 160 pounds; hair, black and kinky; eyes, maroon; complexion, medium light brown. Two large cut scars on left side of face, one extending to corner of nose. *If located,* wire J. A. Pitcock, Chief of Police, Little Rock, Arkansas.

F. P. C. (13) 27 W MO 13
F. P. C. 12 W MI 13



ELMER SYLVESTER DOWLING. Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution. (Assault with Dangerous Weapon). Reward: MASTER DETECTIVE, \$100. Age, 31; height, 6 feet, 1½ inch; weight, 204 pounds; hair, blond, thin on top; eyes, gray-blue; complexion, fair; receding chin. *If located,* wire J. E. Hoover, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D. C.

F. P. C. 16 20 W IOO
F. P. C. 31 W IIO



LOUIS BUCHALTER. Aliases, "Lepky", Kauvar, Cohen, Buckholts. Violation Narcotic Laws. Reward: MASTER DETECTIVE, \$100. Age, 41; height, 5 feet, 7½ inches; weight, 160 pounds; hair, dark brown; eyes, blue; complexion, dark. Nose large, rather straight and blunt. *If located,* wire Commissioner, Bureau of Narcotics, Washington, D. C.

F. P. C. 15 O 25 W II 16
F. P. C. M 27 W O

THE LINE-UP IS A FREE PUBLIC SERVICE

Five dollars is paid for each photograph used in THE LINE-UP. "Screen" photos, metal cuts, newspaper photos and police circular photos CANNOT be used. Send only original photo or copy of original. When sending in photo for THE LINE-UP, give fugitive's name, aliases, nature of crime charged with, rewards, occupation, age, weight, height, color of hair, complexion, all distinguishing marks, personal characteristics, date photo was taken; date and place of escape; fingerprint classification, criminal record, if any, and the name and address of the officer who wants the fugitive. No photos will be used except those authorized from official sources. Photos of fugitives who have been charged with the more serious crimes, such as murder or armed assault, are preferable, but all are considered.

More Than a Million Persons Will Read This Issue

Besides of MASTER DETECTIVE possessing photographic information concerning fugitives pictures on our LINE-UP, it is urged that reporters and **FIRET**—Communicators with their local police or the police in the city where the fugitive may be located. Advise us IMMEDIATELY upon identification of fugitive through THE LINE-UP. It is essential that this magazine be notified the moment that direct action is taken. **MASTER DETECTIVE**, Chanin Building, 123 East Forty-second Street, New York City. **MASTER DETECTIVE** reserves the right to pay reward for fugitives identified through THE LINE-UP. (Police officers who effect the capture of fugitives wanted by their own departments are not eligible for THE LINE-UP rewards.) **MASTER DETECTIVE** reserves the right to pay reward to the person who first identifies the fugitive prior to his arrest, even though the photo was taken after his capture.

MASTER DETECTIVE reserves the right of final decision in determining whether or not the evidence submitted by the claimant to the reward is sufficiently clear and conclusive.

Total rewards this month, \$1125.



View of north side of the Stafford Springs house, in which dramatic action in the case occurred

CIRCUS

The Riddle of

By LOWELL



Outstanding in the inquiry was Officer William Stephenson (left), astute investigator

AT a quarter past two yesterday morning of May 10th, 1936, State Trooper William H. Stephenson, on telephone duty at the Stafford Springs Barracks of the Connecticut State Police, heard somebody hammering on the door. He opened it and three men entered supporting a half-dressed girl with badly hurt head. Stephenson ran upstairs to awaken Sergeant Harris J. Hublert in charge of the barracks.

He at once recognized the injured woman as 23-year-old Alice Anderson, personal secretary to State's Attorney Michael D. O'Connell.

She was too hysterical to speak. One of the men identified himself as George F. Bartlett of nearby Rockville. He was engaged to Miss Anderson and spending the weekend at her home, 55 Center Street in Stafford Springs where she lived with her mother, Mrs. Mary A. Anderson, and her uncle, Albert W. Mullins.

He stated that a man had broken into the Mullins home, gone into an upper chamber where the two women lay asleep and attempted to steal the contents of an open jewel case lying on the bureau. Miss Anderson had awakened and given the alarm. In making his escape, the robber had struck the girl over the head and shot her mother. The assailant disappeared. Bartlett ran out on the street and found Normand Panciers and Alfred Andrelsky seated in a parked car. These two men had brought them to the barracks.

Hublert detailed Troopers Stephenson and Robert M. Herr to go to the Mullins home. The girl recovered with them. They discovered Mrs. Anderson lying upon the bed in a semi-conscious condition. She had been shot through the head.

The two women described their assailant as a young man in his middle twenties, slimly built, about five feet, six inches in height, black hair; with dark trousers and a blue strip-on sweater. He spoke in a low-pitched voice and used good English. They also told of a rusty black cabriolet that had been parked across the street during the previous evening.

Mrs. Anderson was seen by Officer Herr near the Merrimac Laundry where Hublert said was pronounced serious. Miss Anderson, also given emergency treatment, told Sergeant Hublert and Dr. J. McClure Givens how she had fought off the man with her bare hands, adding that one finger had caught and torn the man's lip. Givens glanced at the moderately long finger-nails of her right hand and peered beneath the sharp pointed tips. He showed the Sergeant what he had discovered.

"That may help you get your man," he observed.

Stephenson, searching about the Mullins home, found a man's footprints in the flower bed outside an open pantry window. Tiny heaps of dirt of the same type lay on the sill and around. A trail of half-burned matches led to the front hall. As far as he could see nothing had been touched since the first story.

Hublert and Herr joined in the investigation. They gazed over the heap of jewelry lying on the top of the bureau in the woman's bedroom. Herr pulled down the covers of the bed and drew out a small flat object of black bakelite imprinted with an owl's head. Hublert identified this clue as a portion of a revolver grip. Bartlett and Mullins told the police that the armed intruder dashing by them, ran down-

stairs into the living room and dove through a large window. Examination of the ground beneath the window revealed nothing but broken pieces of glass.

Questioning of both Miss Anderson and Bartlett revealed that the mysterious cabriolet had been parked across the street all evening and was occupied by a small dark-faced man with wavy hair. It was gone at half-past ten when the couple returned after driving the girl's married sister home.

More troopers detailed from the barracks began an intensive search of the town, aided by local police led by Assistant Deputy Chief George Kealy acting under orders of 84-year-old Chief Louis Helm, oldest active police chief in the United States. More footprints similar to those in the flower bed were found by Stephenson beneath a neighbor's window at 44 Center Street. She reported that her guests had been frightened by a man staring in at them during a late bridge game.

Just before dawn, Hublert and more troopers sped to the Stafford Fair Grounds where the Buckus and Kilonis Wild Animal Circus was staying over. They moved in and out of the gaudily painted trucks and trailers as jungle beasts from slumber roared angrily in steel-barred cages. After much questioning the Sergeant discovered the records of employees at the Executive Wagon were not complete. He detailed two troopers to travel with the show until the personal life of every man could be investigated.

Additional efforts to apprehend the armed fugitive increased with daylight. Under the direction of Frank Chamery, chief of the State Police Bureau of Identification, troopers dusted the doors and furniture of the circus grounds for prints. The broken, rubberized grip found in the bed had come, he stated, from the butt of a .22 caliber Iver Johnson revolver. Later that same morning, Primo Boechiotti, night watchman at the factory of the Rhode Island Worsted Company, not far from the Mullins home, reported that a gun of similar type and design had been stolen during the early morning hours from the engine room.

THE condition of Mrs. Anderson remained critical as Hublert broadcast an eight state alarm by radio and teletype. Panic seized this New England town when it became known that a potential killer, armed and desperate, was at large. Women refused to leave their homes after dark.

During the next two days scores of tips were run down by the police and many suspects taken into custody for questioning.

Meanwhile, the Buckus and Kilonis Wild Animal Circus opened in Rockville on Monday as scheduled, and from there went to Willimantic. The State Troopers assigned by Hublert traveled with it. Day and night they had kept its members under close surveillance. So far as they had learned nothing. They again stood alertly by as the long, snake-like train rolled into the grounds and unpacked. They followed into the mess tent and lingered near the animal cages as uniformed keepers threw hunks of raw meat to starving animals. Out on the grounds the circus again began to take shape. They watched one crew set up the front entrance of the main tent under the expert supervision of an unshaven roustabout;

MANHUNT

Connecticut's Bearded Burglar

AMES NORRIS



Alice Anderson (right), whose shocking experience with the bearded burglar started police on an extensive manhunt



This man, taken into custody by determined authorities, wore a beard when he was arrested

some time later they watched this same employee work on the life saving nets inside the big top.

"Don't these chaps ever shave?" one of the troopers asked.

A wan-faced man who had kept them more or less under constant observation since their arrival ducked quickly back out of sight. That night as huge lights lit up the grounds and a blaze of trumpets announced the opening of the evening show, this same wan-faced individual, now in the uniform of a door keeper, stole out from behind a cage and approached the two troopers in the animal tent.

"There's something I must tell you," he said nervously.

He had come from a hidden cage taken to a dark corner. There he told them his name was Harry Nichols, of Worcester, and that he was traveling with the show as sign painter and door keeper. He said after Saturday night's performance in Stafford Springs he had walked down to the village for a cup of coffee. Halfway down Center Street on his way back to the circus grounds he had seen a man coming toward him. He wore a dark sweater and was hatless. As he watched, the figure turned off the sidewalk and walked across a lawn to an unlighted house.

"I heard him say 'How am I going to get in here?'" Nichols declared. "Then he walked around the house and when I came along I heard him start shouting by a window." Said Hublert and when he answered his voice was faint. It turned around for a better look. But he had stepped out of the shadows. I felt everything was not as it should be, so I left as I didn't want to get into trouble. When I got back to the fair grounds I heard what sounded like a pistol shot. I knew nothing further until you fellows came and I heard what happened."

Asked whether he thought the man he saw was with the show he replied that he wasn't sure; but the next morning when the circus reached Danielson, Nichols hurried to State Police barracks "D" in that town. While there, Roy Jones, another circus man, contacted Trooper Henry Zehrer of State "D" patrolling the grounds.

"How's that woman who was shot in Stafford Springs?" he asked.

"Pretty bad," Zehrer returned gravely.

"Then I'll talk," Jones said. "There's a man with this circus who's been keeping out of sight as much as possible since we left that town. This morning he shaved for the first time since Saturday. The lower part of his face is covered with deep scratches."

"Who is this man?" the trooper asked, and Jones told him. Hublert telephoned Hublert who immediately ordered Herr to proceed to the circus grounds at Danielson. Stephenson was instructed to go to Station "D" in that same town in company with Miss Anderson and Bartlett to await developments.

As the troopers set out, Nichols, the circus door keeper, was just leaving the barracks. He had told substantially the same story as related by Jones.

Herr met Zehrer soon after six o'clock. The latter led him to the big top where a freshly shaven youth of about twenty-six was checking on the netting used by performers in high trapeze and acrobatic work.

"There he is," Zehrer said, pointing him out. "His name is Johnny Spicer."

As Hublert came closer he saw that the suspect's lips and lower portion of his face were marred by deep half-healed scratches. The trooper stopped forward.

"John Spicer," he said, "you're under arrest for the attempted murder of Mrs. Alice Anderson."

They took him at once to the Danielson Barracks. After being fingerprinted he was hustled into line with other men in the guard room. Stephenson entered with Miss Anderson and Bartlett. The gate traveled down the row of sullen faces.

"What's the man?" she said, pointing to Spicer.

"You're wrong, lady," he protested in a low-pitched voice.

"What's the man?" she repeated. "When she saw you trying to steal her jewelry and you tried to silence her, you leaned over the left side of the bed with your left side nearer her. Those marks on your face were made by her fingers and we will prove it in court. Furthermore, when she was treated at the hospital, pieces of your skin were found beneath her nails. These have been preserved; if necessary we will fit them into those wounds."

INSTINCTIVELY the man raised both hands to his face; his expression changed.

"I guess you've got me," he said. "I did it."

At the Stafford Springs barracks, after several attempts at denial, he made a complete confession to Sergeant Hublert and Assistant Deputy Chief Kealy in the presence of Troopers George H. Ferris and John Flaherty. In April, 1936, after leaving his parents' home in Harrisville, New York, he had drifted to Crystal Lake, New Hampshire, where he had secured work at the winter quarters of the circus and later had gone on the road. It was his job to set up the front entrance of the main tent and erect the safety nets in the big top.

He had not been paid, he said, since he had been hired, and on Saturday night in Stafford Springs he had gone down to the circus office after the show to see what he could steal and turn over cash. He obtained the revolver and the shotgun for more plunder. Through the lighted window he had watched the Anderson women take off their jewelry, and he thought that could make an easy haul. He saw Nichols and ducked into hiding. After his unsuccessful attempt he threw away the gun and rejoined the show. In Willimantic he saw the troopers watching him. He thought they had detected the scratches under his beard, and was going to run away. Then he felt this would arouse suspicion. He continued to Danielson instead and shaved for the first time after leaving Stafford Springs. He looked uneasily about as he finished his confession, and then motioned Sergeant Hublert closer.

"What's the man?" he said. "This is the last one."

"Mrs. Anderson will probably recover," the Sergeant replied slowly. "When her daughter knocked your firing arm upwards she probably saved you from the electric chair."

On Thursday, May 14th, 1936, John Spicer was arraigned in the Stafford Borough Court presided over by Judge William H. Head, charged with attempted murder and burglary. He pleaded guilty to both counts and was held in \$20,000 bail. In June, on trial before the Tolland County Superior Court, he was sentenced to serve twenty-two years in the State Prison at Wethersfield.

Six Doomed Men

(Continued from page 39)

blackmail money from the policy operators. Each banker had to divide his earnings with the new gang—or else.

Third on the list was "choke money," or tribute, bled from dealers in small artichokes, much favored by housewives. Twenty-five dollars on every carload sold in New York was paid to the Navy Street Gang, and while such a tax on a relatively obscure and unimportant vegetable might seem negligible, it later was to form the basis for the war chest of a gang of which New York City had not seen the last.

Fourth of the major sources of revenue was the money extorted from the hard-working coal and ice dealers, who had to pay from five to ten dollars a month to protect their horses and carts from destruction.

THIS money was never banked, but was kept secure in a strong box with three locks. Vollero, Ricci and Don Pellegrino each held a key, and it took three keys to open the locks.

The Morellos, led by Ciro and Vincent, saw the golden stream flowing into the pockets of their avowed enemies and made ready for a counter-attack. But the Navy Street men were more powerful than ever and the leaders were well protected. The most that the Morellos could do would be to carry on a guerrilla war of terrorization. This they did, and three times within a month, Alessandro Vollero was peppered by bird shot.

It was an old gang trick—to let the victim first have a charge of bird shot to make him aware that death was at hand—and then follow with heavier death-dealing cartridges.

Vollero was incensed; his face purpled with rage every time he thought of it. He called a conference of his confederates and demanded a speedy end to the Morellos.

They agreed, and Totanno Morticella, a lesser light of the gang, not known to the Harlem neighborhood, was asked to hire a room opposite the house where the Morellos lived—a place where some one might shoot them down from the window with a rifle or double-barreled shotgun.

Morticella promised to do his best. A few days later he returned. He confessed failure.

Andrea Ricci's face tightened in anger. He showered curses on Morticella, and before he could offer explanations, dismissed him from the gang. They turned to another man, Dominick La Herasse.

"We asked Morticella to do us this favor, and he refused," Ricci told him. "We do not trust him any more. See what you can do."

La Herasse, who had spoken with Morticella, scratched his head.

"But, *Capo*," he protested, "right opposite the Morellos is a hospital. You cannot obtain rooms there."

Ricci glared at the man who dared suggest that he, Ricci, had made a foolish blunder.

"You are a fellow-townsman, do this for us!"

Vollero, nursing his injuries, added his pleas.

"Do it before they kill us," he begged.

But La Herasse fared no better than his predecessor, and the leaders sought other means of getting to the elusive Morellos. They sent two men to discover if they were straying outside their district, some place where they might be ambushed. But

here again, the Morellos were playing safe and they could not be trapped.

The Navy Street men tried another course. They sent an emissary for Louis the Wop, then living with the Morellos as a member of the gang. They told him that if he would poison their food, he would be made a leader in the Navy Street mob.

"I will see what I can do," promised Louis the Wop. "As soon as I have done it, I will come down to join you."

But nothing came of it, for Louis the Wop reported the conversation to his chiefs, and the matter ended there, except for the laughter that it caused the Morellos to think that their enemies would stoop to such childish means of revenge.

There was one sequel to this attempt

TUNE IN! TRUE DETECTIVE MYSTERIES ON THE AIR!

WLW Cincinnati—
Tuesday 10 P.M. E.S.T.

WGN Chicago—
Tuesday 9 P.M. C.S.T.

**WOR Newark, N. J.—New
York, N. Y.—**
Tuesday 10 P.M. E.S.T.

WFIL Philadelphia—
Tuesday 10 P.M. E.S.T.

on the part of the Navy Street men to wipe out their enemies. They learned that one of their own number, a wiry, black-haired youth known as Joe Chuck, had been seen in Harlem near the Morellos headquarters. This meant only one thing—Chuck was a spy, selling information to the Sicilians.

One evening Joe Chuck received orders to go to a lonely pier on the Brooklyn waterfront. The night was dark, the only light was from an occasional street lamp on the deserted quayside. A sea fog hung over the swirling black river and curtains of "gray mist rolled shoreward. When Chuck reached the entrance to the deserted pier, streaks of orange flame cut through the fog, carrying a leaden message of death. When the police found him, he was clutching a penny in his hand—gangland symbol for a "squealer."

The effect of Joe Chuck's murder was to tighten discipline in the gang. As the extortion money rolled in, the leaders grew increasingly rapacious, squeezing everyone along the line for the last cent of tribute. And judging by the record of the way the despicable mobsters operated it was no wonder that that rule had to be enforced by cold steel; for while the kingpins were enriching themselves, the underlings were paid a mere pittance by the organization. Ledgers later brought to light showed that pay was handed out every Monday according to three scales—married men, single men and part-time "workers."

Married men received twenty dollars a week; single, ten; and part-time, seven. One exception was made—a single man who was supporting an aged father re-

ceived fifteen dollars. No extra provision was made in case the man was supporting his mother. Try to figure that one!

Small wonder then that there was trouble among the underlings, and that loyalty was none too strong. Undercurrents of dissatisfaction were kept under control until the spring of the following year, when the leaders suspected a henchman, Luis Demaro, of "loss of enthusiasm." This ailment was never tolerated. Ralph the Barber was ordered to put him on the spot, and on May 7th, Demaro was shot and killed in front of 123 Navy Street.

But this time the general public was not so apathetic to the outbreaks of lawlessness in the gangland sections, and a special Grand Jury investigation was ordered. There was a conference among the leaders of the Navy Street Gang and, when it was over, Ralph the Barber was summoned.

"You must lie low," Alessandro Vollero told him. "The police will be looking for you within a few days. Get away somewhere—the further the better."

Ralph Daniello nervously agreed that such a course of action was best. He was given \$200, and he left for Montreal, Canada, to wait until things had quieted down.

With Daniello gone, the gang was able to weather the probe and face the police inquiries. Additional funds were sent to Montreal and Ralph the Barber moved to Reno, Nevada. He was still wary of coming back to New York. It was July before the gang heard from him again.

"Please send me my razors and some money," he wrote. "I am broke and I want to make a living out here."

DON PELLEGRINO read the letter and handed it over to Vollero. The latter scowled.

"I sent him money once, why should we send any more? If he wants to make a living let him come back here with us."

Accordingly the letter was torn up and never answered.

In Reno, Ralph the Barber grew increasingly impatient. To his friend, Tony Cheese, he wrote: "If they don't give me what I want, that is help, I will send for the police and I will tell all that is going on in New York."

"Don't pay any attention to him, he's a lot of noise," said Vollero, when Cheese informed him of the letter.

Don Pellegrino was another one to laugh at the threat of Ralph the Barber to turn against the gang. "That milk-face," he sneered, recalling Daniello's habit of paling at every crisis. "If I say boo he will faint from fright."

But while Don Pellegrino was laughing, the foundation of his gangland structure was beginning to crumble beneath his feet.

Smarting with resentment, Ralph the Barber walked into the office of the Reno Chief of Police and asked to be sent to New York. Wires buzzed, and three detectives from the Main Office Division raced to Reno as the New York authorities jumped at the chance to gain an opening wedge in the effort to crack gangland's wall of silence. With the greatest secrecy surrounding all operations, Daniello was rushed back to the city. For a week he talked to the District Attorneys of Manhattan and Brooklyn, repeating conversations and conferences in great detail and spread out on the

record the manifold operations of the Navy Street and allied gangs. Before he was through, the police had information which cleared up no less than FIFTY-ONE MURDERS!

While Daniello was lifting the shroud of secrecy, Andrea Ricci, the gray-faced one, succumbed to a cancerous ailment. His funeral was planned for November 16th, and a squad of picked detectives was assigned to mingle with the mourners.

Detective Felix B. De Martini, ace of the Homicide Squad, then of the Sixth Branch Bureau, was among the group at the funeral parlor. His keen eyes swept the faces in vain for the sight of one of the gang. Evidently something had warned them to lie low. After the casket had been carried out, and the procession was ready to start, Detective De Martini was standing on the sidewalk when a bulky figure hurried toward one of the funeral coaches. It was Alessandro Vollero, who had remained hidden until the last moment.

De Martini reached the coach door before Vollero, and with a triumphant smile on his rugged face, asked the gang chief to throw up his hands. Vollero's eyes popped in amazement. It was the first inkling that he had, that the rumors were true.

Vollero was hustled to the police station and booked at an outlying precinct in order to prevent news of the arrest from getting into the newspapers. But the danger signal raced through underworld channels like wildfire. Immediately there was a scattering of the gang.

WEEKS of patient undercover work followed. Trails were picked up that led through the underworld of large eastern cities, from Philadelphia to Albany to Boston. But by the end of the month the major figures of the gang were in custody, including Pellegrino Marano, Leopoldo Lauritano, Tom the Turk, Buffalo Mike and Lefty Esposito.

Tony the Shoemaker Paretti and the Butcher had vanished.

With the major part of the gang in custody, it was still a difficult matter for the authorities to make convictions stick. There were delays, adjournments, reversed decisions and new trials. Alessandro Vollero was found guilty of first degree murder and sentenced to the chair, only to be given a new trial by the Court of Appeals. A compromise was reached whereby he pleaded guilty to second degree murder and was sent to Sing Sing for from twenty years to life. With him on the same charge was Don Pellegrino.

With two of the main leaders now feeling for the first time the sting of the law, the smoke was soon cleared from the remaining legal battlegrounds. Lauritano, Esposito, Carillo, Buffalo Mike and Tom the Turk pleaded guilty to manslaughter in the first degree and were sent to the grim State Prison for terms of from six to ten years.

Ralph the Barber pleaded guilty to manslaughter and, in view of his services to the State in smashing the gang, was given a suspended sentence. His freedom, however, was short-lived. One month later, the thug in his nature got the upper hand, and on January 5th, 1920, he assaulted a man and his wife on the Coney Island subway station. Immediately arrested, the suspended sentence was put into effect. He served five years in prison and was released at the expiration of his minimum sentence. One week after his release, in August, 1925, he was found in Newark, New Jersey, with a bullet through his head, a victim of gang revenge.

*& that old
Velvet flavor
sure keeps
a pipe
in tune*

Better smoking tobacco

*—the MILDNESS
of fine old
Kentucky Burley
aged in wood*

*—the FLAVOR
of pure maple
sugar for extra
good taste*

Velvet packs easy in a pipe
Rolls smooth in a cigarette
Better tobacco
for both

Master Detective

The power of the Navy Street Gang was smashed, but fate still had some grim jokes to play before the final reckoning.

Years passed and Tony the Shoemaker decided that he wanted to live in the open again. With Daniello murdered, he was confident that there would be no witnesses to appear against him. Through his lawyer he arranged in March, 1926, for his surrender to an indictment charging him with the murder of Nicholas Morello and Charles Ubrico ten years before.

ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY JAMES I. CUFF had charge of the people's case. Through confidential sources he located the Butcher, Alphonse Sgroia, had him brought over from Italy and made him testify against Paretti. Sgroia faced murder indictments, but was willing to take his chances.

Once again the whole history and ramifications of the sinister gang were revealed. Members who were still in prison were brought down to testify, but they openly defied the Court.

"I swore seven years ago on the tomb of my mother that I would never be a witness for or against anybody," burst out one of the underlings, Ignacio Vac-

carro, when asked to take the stand. Buffalo Mike Notaro and some of the others developed appalling lack of memories and their testimony was worthless.

But Cuff pressed on relentlessly, and when the trial was over, Tony the Shoemaker Paretti, who thought that the law would be powerless against him, was found guilty of first degree murder and had a death sentence staring him in the face.

So tense was feeling at the time, that crowds swarmed the streets in front of the courthouse on the day of the sentence, and Police Commissioner George B. McLaughlin feared that Paretti's allies might take advantage of the confusion to attempt to free the prisoner and take vengeance against Cuff.

At a dramatic moment, as the last words of the sentence fell from the Judge's lips, McLaughlin, with a squad of detectives, appeared in court to protect Cuff.

McLaughlin put an arm around the wiry Prosecutor and, despite the latter's protests that he did not want protection, stayed with him as he left the building. "If they do anything to you," said the Commissioner, "they will have to do it to me first."

When the conviction against Tony the Shoemaker was upheld by the Court of Appeals, the gangster was almost frantic.

He paced his cell by the hour, cursing himself for ever having been fool enough to surrender, and his bitterness was not lessened by the realization that he would be the sole member of the gang to get the chair, for the Butcher, Sgroia, had been allowed to serve a short prison term and was deported to Italy.

Tony the Shoemaker was led to the execution chamber on the night of February 17th, 1927, and when the icy hand of death gripped his heart, the last of the Navy Street Gang was dealt with by the law.

There is one strange fact still to be recorded. Ciro Morello, better known as Ciro Terranova, continued his mysterious way in New York City. He saw the Navy Street Gang shattered, and although his old allies, the other five on Ricci's list of the doomed, were killed or jailed, he still continued his criminal activities. Under his domination the artichoke racket was built up into one of the city's major extortion schemes. A few years ago Mayor Fiorella LaGuardia prohibited the sale of small artichokes in order to break up the combination. Terranova died in 1938, a broken man.

Thus does this case well illustrate that every criminal, sooner or later, comes to misery and complete failure—and usually, to a violent death.

Broken Bodies

(Continued from page 47)

had deceived several reputable doctors into believing the patients examined had cases of heart trouble that would eventually prove fatal. No, if Doctors Krupp and Goldstein were involved in this sinister business, it would be necessary to get the goods on them.

Meanwhile, the picture of the inner workings of the ring was coming nearer to focus each day by virtue of the telephone tape and the phonograph recordings that were being made of all overheard conversations. The situation was now such that the investigators listening in were able to evaluate any individual information in relation to the picture as a whole.

J. J. Weiss, who was looming larger and larger as the man behind the whole plot, was continuing to warn certain telephone callers not to speak over the wire, but to come in and discuss their business personally. However, human nature being what it is, some of those warned from time to time found it impossible to restrain themselves from calling Weiss and discussing urgent business. Even Weiss himself occasionally became so engrossed in the problem at hand that he neglected to respect his own injunction against talking over the telephone.

By this time, Inspectors Shea, McLenan and those working the tapping angle with them had become familiar with the voices of Martin Gross, Chaser of the ring; Ben Nelson, Guinea Pig Number One; Morris Spitz and Herman Berger, the men whose claims for many hundreds of dollars a month for the rest of their lives were now pending with various insurance companies; and with the victims of Weiss and Messman, of course.

One day during the approaching Easter season of 1937, it became evident that there was considerable dissension within the ranks of the crooks. Weiss got down to his office on lower Fifth Avenue a few minutes after nine o'clock on the morning of the day in question. The listeners knew that, because they heard him calling his tailor. About nine-thirty, a man identifying himself as Dr. Krupp telephoned. This was the first time that he had been

mentioned by name during any of the calls.

"Listen here, Weiss," said Dr. Krupp, obviously very upset about something, "do I get paid for that matter, or don't I?"

"Look, Doc, can't you stop down here and talk that over with me—instead of over a wire that might be tapped?"

"I haven't time to come down there. I'm in other trouble, and I want to know whether I get my seven fifty or not."

"How much?" It was obvious that Weiss was hearing the figure for the first time, and considerably to his amazement.

"Seven hundred and fifty dollars. Didn't Spitz tell you that was the fee?"

"Well, no, I didn't know exactly what the figure was; but whatever it is, I assure you it will be all right, Doc. You've got to string along with us until I get the whole thing settled; though, I'm having trouble, too, you know, with a certain party. And in the bargain I've laid out over a thousand on that matter already—right out of my own pocket and in cold cash. I can't pay you until I get paid myself."

"Listen, Weiss," said the medico, ominously, "that thing hasn't gone through yet. You still need my name on certain papers, and I'm not signing unless I get my money. I'd rather lose the whole thing than go on an inch further unless you settle."

"Look, Doc," the ringleader said, and his tone was pleading, "can't you possibly get down here if the rest do? And then we can get the matter thrashed out once and for all and everybody will be happy. But for heaven's sake, don't phone me again. Think it over, and if you can get here at ten in the morning, be here."

Next, Weiss called Dr. Messman. "What's the matter with you?" he said to the Central Park West physician. "Krupp's on my tail for \$750. First you ask for twenty-five hundred, now he comes in with a bill for seven fifty. I thought you said he was a friend of yours and would give us a figure within reason. After all, what has he done? Signed a few papers."

"Listen," said Messman slowly and

evenly, "to who is talking?"

"What do you mean?" Weiss retorted. "You are the gentleman, if I am not mistaken, who cautioned everybody about speaking over the telephone."

"Nobody can make head or tail out of what I'm saying. I'm merely telling you to go up and see that other doctor—and go there and don't phone—and tell him everything's going to be all right when the S matter is settled, and get him down at my office in the morning. You be here with him—at ten sharp. I'm getting S and L and G in, too."

Next, two calls were made simultaneously—one by Messman to Dr. Krupp, and the other by Weiss to Martin Gross. Let us listen in on Messman's call first.

"**L**OOK, GEORGE," he said to Krupp, "Weiss just phoned me, raising—with me about you raising—with him. Why can't you go easy until the insurance companies start paying Spitz off? I've got some money coming, too, you know, but I'm stringing along with the boys because I can't do anything else."

"Hirsch," said Krupp, still angry, "you know you told me I'd be paid on the line if I okayed those Spitz claims. Now, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going down to Weiss' office tomorrow morning at ten. He says everybody's going to be there. If I don't get satisfaction then, I'm through, and no more applications will be signed unless it's over my dead body."

And now let us listen to Weiss talking to Chaser Gross:

"Martin, jump in your car and have Nelson and Spitz down here at ten tomorrow morning sharp. And you come, too. I want to get that Spitz matter settled once and for all. It's giving me a headache."

"J. J., you should see the headache I got!" shouted the effervescent Gross. "You know what? You know all the work I done, don't you, J. J.? Well—"

"Martin," cut in Weiss, exasperated, "can't it wait—can't you tell me tomorrow?"

"I won't mention no names. Look: You know the money I laid out for Morrie (Spitz). Well, he turns in his car and gets allowed \$275 on it, and has the credit standing at the car place, see? So I use up \$175 of Morrie's credit at the place, for a car for myself, see, and now Morrie's sore at me. There's no appreciation in some people."

"Martin," said Weiss sarcastically, "my heart bleeds for you."

Gross, like Dr. Messman, was apparently disobeying the lawyer's instructions about carrying out his orders personally rather than by telephone, for within five minutes after Weiss called the Chaser, Morris Spitz telephoned the attorney.

"Listen, J. J.," Spitz began. "Gross tells me you want to see me in your office tomorrow morning. Now, how am I going to be there with those investigators from the—"

"Remember, you're on a phone," warned Weiss.

"Well, it won't look good if I'm out, and me supposed to be you know what. And, anyway, what's the use of talking forty per cent? We've been all over that before. It's twenty-five or nothing. I'll chuck the whole thing before I'll go a point higher."

"LOOK, SPITZ, I'll promise you we'll come to an agreement in the morning. Be here, like a good fellow."

"All right, but you don't get no forty per cent."

Weiss banged down the telephone in a blaze of oaths at all this talk over the wire. But if he thought he was through with worries on that score, he had calculated without the verbose Gross. For the lawyer had no sooner hung up than the Chaser was on the wire again.

"Listen, J. J., I got bad news. Benny's chunked the pills out of the window."

Weiss was so intrigued by the implications of Gross' remark that he said:

"Martin, would you mind repeating what you just said? I want to make sure I got it right."

"You got it, all right, J. J. He's falling down on us. Says he's sick all the time with the stuff he's taking for the exam, and he ain't going to take no more."

"How can he figure that way? The exam's set for Friday—this coming Friday—only four days away. And you've got to take him to Newark."

"He says he'll take coffee before it, and that'll do the trick."

Weiss launched into a verbal assault against Ben Nelson. Then he said to Gross, "I'll hold you responsible for getting that guy in here tomorrow morning at ten."

It was now clear to the investigators that Weiss was having trouble on several scores. Apparently, he wanted forty per cent of what Spitz would collect from the companies, and the claimant wished to hold the lawyer's fee down to twenty-five per cent. Then there was Dr. Krupp, asking for his fee. And, on top of it all, Ben Nelson, whose examination by Prudential Insurance physicians at the com-

pany's home offices in Newark was imminent, was kicking over the traces on having to take so much digitalis.

The next morning, detectives covering the building where Weiss had his offices, saw Gross, Doctors Krupp and Messman, and Nelson and Spitz arriving for the conference that had been fixed up the day before. It was apparently quite a session, for the men did not reappear in Fifth Avenue for three hours. But at that time they all seemed to be in a jovial frame of mind as there was much laughing and back-slapping at the curb before they went their separate ways.

On the day before Good Friday—the date set for Nelson's examination—Weiss received a call from the insurance company. The company was sorry, but when the date for the examination had been set, some one had overlooked the fact that it would be Good Friday, a holiday, and so the Nelson business was postponed until the following Monday.

Weiss called Nelson on the telephone. "Look, Benny," he said in his suavest tone, "tomorrow is Good Friday and your examination is to be put over until Monday."

Nelson began to protest immediately. "You got me taking them pills again and I'm sick again!" said Guinea Pig Number One. "J. J., you're killing me!"

Weiss smoothed Nelson's feathers down as best he could, and Nelson promised to stay in line, providing there were no more delays.

In the meanwhile, the probe into the lives of the "permanently disabled" gentlemen who were hanging around the Broadway brokerage house, playing the market with money they had for some time been collecting from the insurance companies, was spreading fanwise over three of New York's boroughs—Manhattan, the Bronx and Brooklyn.

SURVEILLANCE of the original twelve suspects in the ticker-tape place disclosed that they were on friendly terms with a rapidly mounting list of individuals who had also for some time been collecting on total disability claims, but who were obviously far removed from serious illness. The sleuths had already spotted an additional score of such men, and there seemed to be more in the offing. All were living the life of Riley, playing golf or getting up at noon and going to burlesque shows in the afternoon, or just lounging around their homes or neighborhood bars.

The name of Weiss had appeared in the picture as lawyer for some of these claimants at the time the companies had decided on their cases, and Doctors Messman and Goldstein had been the physicians in more than one instance. In some claims, the name of no lawyer had appeared; whereas in others, the names of two partners in a law firm that had hitherto not entered the picture emerged prominently. The further the probe progressed, the more seemingly spurious cases bobbed to the surface.

Certain investigators had been examining bank accounts, and now discovered



Photo by
George F. Pach

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You see, scientists have discovered that many people are thin and weak because they don't get enough Vitamin B and iron from their daily food. Without these vital substances you may look good, but you don't get the real body-building good out of what you eat.

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Master Detective

that apparently some of the men who were collecting on their own policies had also gone in for the work of chasing, or getting insured friends to put in phony disability claims, and were thereby collecting percentages of the "take." Bank accounts of these suspected chasers disclosed that they had made deposits coincidental with receipt of monthly insurance checks by their friends.

Chaser Gross, it was now generally suspected, had, through his legitimate insurance connections, found out the names of holders of big disability policies in other companies and had made it his business to meet such men.

The Nelson examination was held at the Prudential offices in Newark on the Monday following Good Friday. Postal men and insurance detectives picked up Nelson's trail at the man's Bronx residence that morning, and saw that he was accompanied to the New Jersey city by his friend, Gross. When Nelson reappeared forty-five minutes later, he and Gross went to Weiss' office. After a short visit there, Nelson drove Gross home and then went home himself.

THE examination had been highly suspicious, United States Attorney Hardy was informed. Nelson, no doubt well coached by Dr. Messman, had displayed all of the outward manifestations of serious heart trouble without having any of the fundamental ailments. The whole fraud had been easily detected this time, because it marked the first instance where a disability claimant was looked over by physicians who were considering the digitalis angle in advance. Once Nelson's heart condition had been regarded in the light of digitalis, which drug, incidentally, he denied knowing about when asked if he had taken any, it had been clear that the man was in sound health.

This visit of Nelson's to Newark was really one of the most concrete pieces of evidence gathered thus far in the investigation. For it was something tangible and easily provable by several witnesses (the shadowing detectives). The man from the Bronx had been the very picture of bounding vitality at all times during the day, except when he was in the immediate vicinity of the Prudential Building. There, the United States Attorney was informed, he had slowed down his gait, his shoulders drooped, and he supported himself by leaning on desks and against walls as he made his way through the examination rooms.

His act had been so ludicrous that it was all two of the doctors could do to keep from laughing. Then, too, Nelson had been accompanied by Martin Gross. What legitimate reason could Gross possibly have had to accompany Nelson, he being a salesman for another insurance company where Nelson held no policy?

The fraudulent claimant was led to believe that all he told about himself was swallowed hook, line and sinker, for that was the strategy decided upon. The day following the examination, Weiss telephoned the New York offices of the Prudential, and informed the claims department that it had better get busy and mail Nelson's overdue check.

"But your client, Nelson, seems to be all right," Weiss was informed.

"What do you mean?" Why, he told me he could hardly walk when he got ever to Newark? "The trip almost killed him."

"Yes," came the disconcerting reply, "but he seemed to regain his strength after the examination was over. When he and the fat gentleman who accompanied him arrived at your office at two-thirty yesterday afternoon, Mr. Nelson was getting along all right without any aid."

"I don't understand what you are talking about," said the lawyer, and there was a singular lack of conviction in his voice. "You'll find out soon enough, Mr. Weiss," came the reply. Then the speaker hung up.

The upsetting news from the Prudential was, of course, carefully thought out in advance by Mr. Hardy and Assistants John F. Dailey, Jr., and Irving Kaufman. It was designed to throw fear into the plotters and put them in an upset state of mind for what was planned next.

Weiss had Gross on the wire immediately after the Prudential man had hung up. "Listen, Martin, something has happened! Those guys know every move you and Nelson made yesterday!"

"You don't say, J. J. Now that's funny! We were on the way home, see, and I says to Benny, 'That car behind us is following us sure, and Benny says he

And now the kingpins of the investigation went into important conference. Hardy, Dailey, Kaufman, Doran, Shea and McLennan burned the midnight oil in the United States Attorney's office. The six men were keeping a long, arduous vigil, and were, like the others in the investigation, utterly forgetting themselves in the interest of the task at hand. Sleep, food, personal pleasures had all gone by the boards since the very beginning of the investigation, and they were a haggard, tired lot.

All available evidence had been presented to a Federal grand jury, and indictments had now been returned against thirty-eight persons. Inasmuch as Weiss and the others in the ring had caused the United States mails to be used in their negotiations with the insurance companies, the charges were based on violation of the mail fraud statutes.

On the morning of May 18th, 1937, just as dawn was breaking over Centre Street, that drab thoroughfare of machine and tool shops, where the greatest structure that is Police Headquarters is located, thirty-two picked men of the Police Department assembled in the anteroom outside the office of Commissioner Lewis J. Valentine. They were there to receive last-minute instructions for the work they were about to perform. Presently, had you been outside Headquarters, you would have seen an inordinately large number of letter carriers arriving, in pairs and singly. Surely, you would have thought, all these men—for you would have counted fifteen—were not necessary to bring the morning's mail to Headquarters. Then, about six o'clock, you would have seen the mail men leaving the building again, and getting into cars with men dressed in plainclothes. Fifteen cars left Headquarters, each with a mail man and all except two of the machines bearing two detectives.

IN a short while, the cars from Headquarters had separated and were traveling in various directions in Manhattan, and toward Brooklyn and the Bronx. At one address in the Bronx, a few minutes after six-thirty, a gray-old letter carrier, in reality a postal inspector, applied a thumb to a door bell. There was no answer, and the man in gray rang again. Soon, a window of the bedroom in the second-floor front opened and a woman stuck her head out.

"Who's down there?" she wanted to know.

"United States mail," came the words from the doorstep. "Registered letter for Herman Berger."

In less than a minute, the woman appeared at the front door. She said she was Mrs. Herman Berger, and the inspector realized that he was facing the woman who, according to some of the overheard telephone calls, had threatened the entire insurance fraud ring with exposure because of her inherent honesty.

"Sorry," said the letter carrier, "but I must deliver this letter personally to Mr. Berger. He has to sign for it, and it says that a return receipt is requested."

"I'll wake him," replied the woman, and she vanished into the hallway.

The mail man looked down the street, where two detectives loitered against a building. He adjusted his stiff gray cap, and the two men from Headquarters began to walk slowly toward the Berger residence.

In a little while, a man with disheveled hair and puffed eyes came to the door in pajamas and bath robe. "Are you Herman Berger?" asked the letter carrier.

"Yes," came the answer. "This is some

TO ALL STATE AND POLICE OFFICIALS

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don't think so. So we ducked it before we got to Holland Tunnel."

"You couldn't have. They know what time you and Nelson got here."

"That looks bad!"

"You're telling me," said Weiss.

It was about this time, when the authorities were getting ready to play their trump cards, that somebody within the ring, probably Weiss, thought of a smart move. For suddenly, everybody under suspicion began to speak in Yiddish or Hungarian while talking over the telephone. Weiss and Messman spoke both languages.

The investigators went into a huddle. It was vital, they decided, to know what was being said at this stage of the game, and they found a simple solution. Several girls and women thoroughly conversant with the Yiddish and Magyar tongues, and just as well acquainted with speedy shorthand, were hastily pressed into service, and took up posts in the two locations where the taps on the Weiss and Messman wires led in. It was the job of these stenographers, who were promptly dubbed G-women, to take down stenographically all overheard conversations and translate them into English with all possible speed.

Further incriminating evidence began to pile up when insurance investigators called at the homes of Spitz and Berger, the duo who claimed to be desperately ill, and found them absent. This resulted in tongue lashings from Weiss, delivered in Yiddish and promptly translated by the listening stenographers.

time to wake a guy up in the morning. What you got there that's so important?"

"Just sign here, Mr. Berger," said the man in gray politely.

Berger took a pencil, the letter carrier proffered and affixed his signature to the receipt. He was given the envelope which contained a blank sheet of paper, and which had been sent from Inspector Doran's office, through the regular United States mails. And then Berger also received something else—an unpleasant surprise in the form of the two detectives who had by this time approached the entrance of his home and who now marched up the steps.

He demanded to know, like most arrested persons, what this was all about. He was informed that he would find out later. He asked time to dress, and the sleuths followed him in while he did so. The man's wife was bitter. "I told you," she snapped at him as he drew on his clothes, "that this insurance business was going to get all of you in hot water that you'd never get out of!"

BERGER made an attempt to quiet his wife, but he was unsuccessful. "I've wanted to tell this for a long time," she continued, speaking now not to her husband but to the detectives, "and now's my chance. I'm going to tell everything I know."

Mrs. Berger was asked if she wanted to tell her story to the United States Attorney. She replied vehemently in the affirmative.

Just as he was ready to go, Berger requested permission to make a telephone call. "It won't do you any good, Berger," said one of the sleuths, "if what you have in mind is to call somebody else and tip him off. All of you men are being arrested simultaneously."

Of the six big shots of the ring—Dr. Messman, Chaser Gross, Ringleader Weiss and Guinea Pig Berger, Spitz and Nelson—it seemed to the Government officials that Ben Nelson would be the most likely to crack, if a certain plan that they had in mind were properly worked.

And so Nelson was taken into a room, offered a chair, a cigarette and what had all the earmarks of sympathetic treatment by Inspector Doran.

"Look here, Nelson," said Doran, "you might as well come clean and tell us the whole story regarding you and Weiss, Gross and all the rest."

"I got nothing to say" retorted Guinea Pig Number One. "My heart's killing me."

"Nelson," said Doran, "you seem to be in pretty bad shape at that. Perhaps you've been taking too much digitalis."

Nelson now shot a quick glance at the Inspector, and the latter knew that he had hit home with that one.

Doran mopped his brow with a handkerchief, a signal to Inspector Shea, peering through a partially opened door leading into an adjoining room, to start a phonograph there. And so, presently, the soft, soothing strains of "Mother Machree" floated into the room where Guinea Pig Number One sat.

Nelson looked up at Doran quizzically, not knowing quite what to make of music in such a setting. Doran just smiled. "I thought," he said kindly, "that a little music would do you good. Nelson; that would take the strain off your heart."

Nelson and Doran just sat there, until "Mother Machree" was finished. Then Shea put on another record—a dance piece. By this time, Nelson was indeed in a quandary. He didn't know what to expect next. But he was not kept long in suspense. After the dance piece was over, Shea put on another record. This was all dialogue, between two men.

"Look, Benny," the record began, "tomorrow is Good Friday and your examination is to be put over until Monday."

"You got me taking them pills again and I'm sick again! J. J., you're killing me!"

As had been prearranged, Shea lifted the phonograph needle right at that point, and the words, "J. J., you're killing me!" still echoed in the next room. Doran was now staring intently at Nelson. When the record had begun, the latter had stiffened and sat bolt upright in his chair, at the familiar voices. As the record progressed, the man ran his hand nervously through his hair, stared furtively at Doran, then away again, and did his best to catch every last word that was coming through the partially opened door. At the sound of the words, "J. J., you're killing me!" Nelson bolted from his chair and just stood there, rigid and statue-like.

Suddenly, Nelson relaxed. He swayed slightly, then dropped back into the chair. The moment that had been so long awaited was at hand.

"Inspector," he said, very calmly, "I am a sick man—but not with the kind of sickness I made believe I had. Those

double-crossers I was mixed up with got me into this. That was my voice in there just now—me and J. J. Weiss. I remember saying that to him. How you got it is record of it I don't know, but you got it and that's good enough for me. Now I guess I'm ready to tell the whole story."

Nelson was taken to the office of United States Attorney Hardy and there, in the presence of Assistants Dailey, Kaufman and others, he began a story that was to last many hours—a story that shocked even these men who were so familiar with crime.

Guinea Pig Number One filled in the missing links of the sinister jig-saw puzzle. He related how he had first been enmeshed in the grim business when Martin Gross, the Chaser, had accosted him that day more than three years previously after Nelson had left the offices of the Equitable Life Assurance Society, where he had gone to adjust a legitimate accident claim.

Step by step, Nelson, motivated both by vengeance against the man responsible for his plight, and a desire to make clear to the officials that he had merely been a tool for individuals with stronger wills and more cunning minds, wove into the criminal pattern J. J. Weiss, Dr. Messman, Dr. Goldstein, Berger and Spitz, in the order that they had appeared in the plot following the fateful day when Gross had first barged into his life. Every last detail that was set down in the earlier installments of this chronicle was supplied by Ben Nelson in his story that day.

THE phonograph setup was next arranged for Morris Spitz, Nelson's friend. Spitz, of course, was not told that Nelson had confessed. Mr. Hardy was anxious to get as much independent corroboration as possible. And so Spitz was put through precisely the same routine as Nelson had undergone. He reacted the same way.

First came the denial of any wrongdoing and cries of frame-up and "I want a lawyer!" Then protestations of a dangerous heart condition, being made rapidly worse by this unjust arrest and questioning. Then "Mother Machree." Then a jazz piece. Then a dialogue record, beginning with Spitz' voice saying to Messman:

"This is Morris, Doc. Look, the investigators are coming around again. One of them was here from the New York Life."

NO WONDER HIS PATIENTS LOST PATIENCE!



FAINTED DEAD AWAY! But Doc can't seem to figure why. Of course Doc doesn't think to blame that cut-throat tobacco in his briar. Get yourself a milder blend!



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TUNE IN Tommy Dorsey and his orchestra. Every Wednesday evening, NBC Red Network.



IT SMOKES AS SWEET AS IT SMELLS

"Nothing to worry about," came Messman's reply. "Just come down here and let me fix you up before you let them examine you again."

"Okay, Doc. Will it be all right to come down tonight?"

"I'll be waiting for you. Make it about eight."

Spitz jumped from his chair. "Am I hearing things! What is this—magic or something?" he demanded of Inspector Doran.

"Nothing of the sort," replied Doran. "It is merely one of many thousand records which we have made during the past several months, of conversations carried on over the telephones of J. J. Weiss and Dr. Messman. Now, Spitz, don't you think you'd better tell us all you know?"

SPITZ scratched his head at the wonderment of it all. "Golly," he said, "I guess I better. If you got that much, you probably got a lot more, and I know when I'm licked. And, anyway, I didn't get a fair shake in this deal. Weiss was out to grab the lion's share of everything, and I had to go through all the trouble, taking those pills and being sick in the hospital, and everything. Sure, Inspector, I'll tell you everything. What do you want to know?"

In answer to Doran's reply, Spitz went to Mr. Hardy's office and talked for many hours, just as his friend Nelson had done. It was not until he was finished with his story that he became aware of the fact that Nelson had talked, too. Mr. Hardy

and his associates were pleased to note that Spitz' account dovetailed with Nelson's in all important details where the two recitals crossed.

Events tumbled over each other with incredible speed after that. To the confessions of Nelson and Spitz were added those of Herman Berger and Dr. Messman, both of whom quickly capitulated to the psychological effect of hearing words uttered months previously came back to haunt them via the phonograph route. Gross, Weiss and Doctors Goldstein and Krupp, the latter two definitely linked to the plot in Messman's story, elected to go to bat and stand trial.

Krupp, Goldstein, Gross and Weiss placed their fate before judge and jury as 1937 drew to a close, and the proceedings lasted into 1938.

Dr. Messman, Spitz, Berger and Nelson had meanwhile pleaded guilty, and were the principal witnesses against the defendants, branded by United States Attorney Hardy, and Assistants Dailey and Kaufman, the trio who handled the Government's case, as being the real ring-leaders of a plot with nation-wide ramifications.

Several thousand records of overheard telephone conversations had accumulated during the long investigation, and scores of the key records were played in the thronged trial chambers in the United States Courthouse in Manhattan's Foley Square. Sleep was virtually an unknown quantity to Hardy, Dailey and Kaufman during the many weeks that they pains-

takingly forged about the heads of the defendants the links of evidence which, when pieced together, spelled guilt to the jury.

Weiss was sentenced to three years, as was Gross. The physicians, Krupp and Goldstein, drew a year and a day each, while the quartet who turned Government evidence were given suspended sentences. As this issue goes to press, appeals of the four convicted men are pending before the United States District Court of Appeals. The manslaughter charge against Krupp, arising out of the alleged criminal operation case, is still pending against the physician.

Even after the arrests of the key men, the investigation continued. In addition to the thirty-eight persons who were indicted before the wholesale arrests in May, thirty-nine additional men were subsequently indicted. And still the probe goes on, just to make sure that there isn't a loose, convictable crook who is still outside the net. Many of the seventy-seven indicted men have pleaded guilty. Others are still to be tried. Included among these are two members of a prominent New York law firm which, like J. J. Weiss, specialized in insurance adjustments.

And so we come to the end of our story about one of the most amazing cases of its kind in the whole history of criminology. Is it any wonder that President Roosevelt, when he heard the details of the plot, was led to remark that he had never heard of anything like it?

Snaring Roediger, Notorious Marrying Swindler

(Continued from page 7)

these cases is hard to fathom. They may merely have been examples of those types of mistakes which nearly all criminals make in carrying out "perfect crimes." Or it may be that some credentials, and possibly bank connections, were necessary to carry out his plans regarding these two particular women.

It is obvious that he could not change his names on bank accounts with the same lightning-like rapidity with which he changed them for his various matrimonial affairs.

This was a weakness in the perfection of his love piracies that he apparently had not foreseen, and it tripped him.

The death of Roediger's last venture was naturally listed in the local newspapers. In far-off Brooklyn, Martha Stender happened to purchase just the issue of a Canadian paper which contained the announcement of her "husband's" bereavement. In scanning the pages her eyes were attracted by the name, Roediger; the name of a man she had married the year before; the name of the man she had left, but never divorced. It was mentioned in connection with the death of "his wife" from epilepsy.

"His wife." Those two words netted Martha, glad as she was to be rid of her erring husband's presence. She showed the news item to the police. They were keenly interested, especially as Roediger's unwarranted escape from the law still rankled.

At their request George Fritz was extradited from Canada to New York State. Here he was tried for bigamy, and much to his surprise, was found guilty. He was sentenced to serve from two to four years in Clinton Prison, Dannemora, New York.

As soon as George Fritz was released his advertisements in search of a wife and companion began to appear in the newspapers again.

The next known victim, and this was in 1935, was Mrs. Christina McKenzie, a widow, of Barrie, Ontario. Their term of conjugal felicity must have seemed unduly long to Roediger, for though they were married in August, in October he was still playing the attentive husband. But to him there was something wrong with Barrie. Perhaps it was too small for the full sweep of his plans regarding his "divine Christina." He told her frequently that if they were happy in Barrie, they'd be much more so in Toronto.

As usual his words were well-oiled, and in the early part of October the widow-bride and her "classified" husband moved to the last named place.

Within a few days after their arrival, Mrs. McKenzie disappeared, and to this day what happened to her remains a mystery. Not so her worldly goods. George Fritz had obtained approximately \$10,000 from the missing woman as his marriage dot, and inasmuch as she failed to return to "his bed and board," he disposed of her furniture and credited the additional money received to his matrimonial profits.

The only thing of value that escaped him was \$200 which the widow had tied up in a private trust, where the sausage-maker could not get his fingers on it. According to investigators who later checked up on the affairs of the vanished Mrs. McKenzie, the widow-bride of a few months must have been practically penniless when she disappeared so mysteriously from her husband's home.

The police were suspicious. They usually are when one's helpmate leaves for parts unknown without telling any one the chosen destination. They searched the Roediger home. In it they found the bride's trunk. It contained two long-bladed butcher knives, a quantity of mercury poison and some of her husband's personal effects.

Roediger was questioned as usual. He could throw no light on his wife's disappearance, nor on the presence of the butcher knives and the mercury poison. His wife had probably become despondent and done away with herself, he declared. If the local officers had known the previous matrimonial escapades of the arch-bigmist, they might have wondered why Roediger's wives, becoming despondent, had such a penchant for killing themselves with mercury. But the mystery of Mrs. McKenzie's absence was to them a puzzle without ramifications. And as they had no evidence on which to hold the man, George Fritz was again set free.

A repetition of Roediger's rapid-fire matrimonial adventures, ending, as each did, in the further fattening of his financial resources, would prove tedious. Most of them were of the same pattern.

STRANGELY enough it was a mild-mannered farm woman in Canada's western province of Manitoba who finally brought ruin to the bigamist's career, and exposed the trail of broken hearts and rifled pocketbooks that his activities had left.

Mrs. Julia Regitnig, comely widow of a farmer, while reading a paper in the spring of 1936, came upon the following advertisement:

"Wanted: contact with farm woman with money to invest."

It interested her because she had a little money; and also because she was lone-some. Her husband had died the year before, leaving her with seven children, a rolling prairie farm near McTavish, and a modest sum.

The farm was a burden for a lone woman to handle, and the requirements of the seven children demanded an income that the farm would hardly provide, now that her good man was no

longer there to work it. Also, she had a woman's curiosity, and the wording of the advertisement stimulated this feminine trait.

She finally decided to answer the "wanted." In consequence, she soon received a visit from a dapper, middle-aged man who spoke with a slight German accent. So changed was the stranger by his years of smooth prosperity and the wealth they had brought him, that it is doubtful if any of his old acquaintances, or even his first wife, Meta, would have recognized Mrs. Regiting's caller. He was gentlemanly in manner, and so suave of speech that the widow was impressed.

She was pleased by his appearance, his politeness, of his praise of the farm and of the way she had handled it. He did not forget frequent, deft tributes to her own attractiveness. And when he picked up each of the seven members of her brood, not without some objections on the part of the youngest, and kissed each and every one, the fortifications of the kindly mother's heart crumbled.

TH E ARCH-hypocrite introduced himself as George Brown. His home, he said, was in Winnipeg, and how lonesome he was for it. As the conversation progressed he appeared to become so charmed by the widow, and to take such an all-absorbing interest in her seven fine children, that he apparently forgot all about the purpose of his call.

When Mrs. Regiting questioned him about "the investment" he could hardly force himself to discuss it, so delighted was he with what that little advertisement had introduced him to. Everything to him was perfect; the widow, the children, and the fruitful acres. The last named he had quickly appraised in terms of good Canadian dollars.

Mrs. Regiting, with her trusting nature, and unaware of her visitor's duplicity, became more and more impressed. It was an event to her to have so courteous a gentleman come to her home and say such polite and pleasing things about her, her family and her farm. Under his ingratiating questioning she was soon telling him all the little personal matters which made up her life. And Mr. Brown was so sympathetic and so understanding that she turned her heart inside out for his crafty, callous eyes to see; and what was more to his purpose, gave him intimate knowledge of her financial condition.

The afternoon sped so fast, and so pleasantly, that Mr. Brown suggested another meeting. From that time on he became a frequent visitor at the Regiting place, and each time he left the widow found herself looking forward to his "speedy return." He now began to take a more personal interest in her and her farm problems. He acted like a kindly father toward the children. He was always courteous, thoughtful and attentive, and Mrs. Regiting was pleasantly astonished to find so many virtues gathered together in the personality of one man.

But time was flying to George Brown. Too many weeks were being spent on preliminaries; so in August he decided to wait no longer. He proposed marriage to the widow.

Mrs. Regiting was swept off her feet by the precipitancy of her suave, but aging, lover. Had she known the real reason for his impetuosity she would have been alarmed. But the wily rascal had given her no cause for mistrust, and she promised to consider his offer.

He continued to press his suit. She finally admitted that she was lonely, that the seven children needed a father. He took her in his arms and whispered his stale love phrases.

Master Detective

On August 18th, 1936, Mrs. Regiting and the dignified George Brown drove to Winnipeg together. Mr. Brown escorted his companion to the county courthouse and said to the license clerk:

"This lady is to be my wife. We want a marriage license."

That same afternoon the still attentive George and the blushing Julia were pronounced man and wife.

Confidently Mrs. Regiting, now a happy "Mrs. Brown," took her new husband's chunky arm and they walked together down the courthouse steps. The weight of worry that had fallen heavily on the woman's slender shoulders now was shifted to "Brown's" own stout ones. She felt certain of new happiness, and did not keep that fact a secret from George.

After an all too brief honeymoon in Winnipeg, where they visited the smart restaurants, took in the shows and indulged in a round of pleasures such as Mrs. Regiting had scarcely imagined on the remote farm, the couple returned to McTavish.

The children took to their new father immediately, and he to them. The neighbors liked "good old George," too, and let him into their circle without reserve.

But somehow George soon became restless. "I'm just not used to it yet," he told his bride. "I'll get settled on a time-mate."

But George Brown did not become settled, and his wife soon saw that his interest in the farm had waned. The real reason she did not guess. It was because she refused to sell it or transfer it to his name. He was smooth enough to conceal his disappointment at this attitude of hers, but it brought him to a quick decision.

One night as she was finishing the dishes he called to her.

"Honey," he said, "this farm business is all to the bad. The crop here this year wasn't any too good. I've been reading about conditions in the States. The Dakotas and Montana had a worse drought than we did. Prices are low and that's bad, too."

"N O W listen, honey. We've just harvested a crop of wheat and we have a few hundred extra cash on hand. I was just thinking that we ought to invest that what we've got it. Now I know a store in Fonthill, Ontario, that has a good location. It can be bought cheaply. I was thinking about it before I met you, and nearly bought it then. It would be an even better investment right now. I think we have enough money—with the cash we got from the wheat and the money you have saved—to swing the deal."

Mrs. Brown was reluctant to take a chance with the little money they possessed. To invest every cent she had in the world in any single venture seemed a mistake to her, but George was positive. He insisted that the bottom had fallen out of farming. She called his attention to the fact that her neighbors were making a comfortable living from the land, and that her husband had always been able to do this before he died.

With well-chosen, plausible words, George showed her how the store deal would provide a quicker turn-over and bring them in money much faster than the farm could, and the trusting woman at length agreed to the plan.

The returns from the wheat harvest and the small savings left by her late husband aggregated \$900.

This was the go to George. Fondly she kissed him good-by at the railway flag station and wished him luck. She took her tenderly, then planted a gentle kiss on the cheek of each of the seven youngsters. He promised to write her frequently

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and to return as soon as his business was completed.

Weeks dragged by. There was no word from George. At first Mrs. Regiting's concern was only for her husband's safety. She really loved this strange man, she told herself. Then finally it began to dawn upon her that things were not what they should be. This man, who had hurried her into marriage, had disappeared with nine hundred hard-earned dollars; had disappeared without a trace.

The more Mrs. Regiting thought about the matter the more certain she became that she had been swindled, and that in all probability she wasn't Mrs. Brown after all.

She hastened to the Police Department in Winnipeg and told her story to Detective Sergeant Alex Calder.

Members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police also discussed the case and were quite ready to assure her as delicately as they could that she had been victimized by a very smooth man whose name they felt quite sure was not George Brown. They began an immediate investigation to try and trace the phantom bridegroom.

S AID Sergeant M. F. E. Anthony, of the Mounties:

"It was a very hard case from the start. We hardly knew where to begin. We were nearly positive, however, that when we eventually did find out about this man, we would discover more than one such case as Mrs. Regiting reported. Really the only thread we had to start with was the application for the marriage license and the very unrevealing name, 'George Brown.' Of course the abandoned bride provided a good description of the man she married. But, you see, that wasn't a lot to go on, either."

Immediately a check was made at Fountain Hill for any trace of a man seeking to buy a store. But, as was expected, George Brown or any other George answering his description, was unknown, and a check of the stores in the hamlet disclosed none had even been offered for sale.

Criminal records were equally fruitless in providing clues. There were numerous "Browns" with criminal records; numerous men who had used that simple alias. But one by one Mrs. Regiting eliminated their pictures.

The police admitted frankly they were baffled. But the Canadian police are not easily discouraged.

It was while the Mounties were seeking to trace George Brown that the first real break came in the search: A letter post-marked in Ontario reached authorities in Winnipeg.

Sergeant Calder, of the Winnipeg police, who had been detailed to the case, was interested immediately in the missive.

It was an appeal from the son of a woman who had married a man named "George Rogers," a meat packer, in the East, and who had moved West. The woman was a Mrs. Christina McKenzie, who had lived in Barrie and Allandale, Ontario. The writer asked police assistance in locating his mother. He said she had married "Rogers" in 1935, and had left almost immediately for the West. Since then, he said, he had neither seen nor heard from her.

At nearly the same time the Royal Canadian Mounted Police asked the co-operation of Winnipeg police in their search for Mrs. Regiting's missing spouse.

It struck Calder that there might be a parallel between the mysterious man who married Mrs. Christina McKenzie and the equally mysterious man who was wedded to Mrs. Regiting and later left her.

The officers began to work on that

theory at once. By a quick exchange of data between the eastern and western investigators, it was discovered that the description of the mysterious Mr. Rogers in the East corresponded closely with that of the mysterious Mr. Brown in the West. Questioning Mrs. Regiting again she recalled that her Mr. Brown had once casually mentioned that he had been a butcher. Mr. Rogers had also been a butcher.

While the officials were tying these loose ends together they received some information which, while they did not know it at the time, was to simplify their problem greatly.

The Winnipeg police received a report from the East that a man had disappeared from a boat that docked at Port Dalhousie, Ontario. Apparently the man had been drowned.

Sergeant A. M. Veith, of the Toronto Detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, was dispatched to the scene to investigate. On arriving he found

which gave them an idea of the fortune he had built up through his matrimonial activities.

Regardless of the work of the authorities, of which he must have learned, the smooth, much-married sausage-maker continued his matrimonial career. Either he must have thought that his simulated suicide had covered his trail completely, or he had developed the belief, common among criminals of his type, that he was too smart to be captured.

On November 11th, 1936, a typical Roediger-Brown-Rogers advertisement appeared in the Montreal *Daily Star*. It sought communication with a person with money to invest. His handiwork was so well known by this time to the authorities all over the country, that it was quickly recognized by the police in Montreal. They immediately communicated with the Mounted Police and with local officials in Toronto and Winnipeg. Roediger's trail was picked up, but his marrying career was so speedy that it continually baffled the ability of the officers to cling to it.

They learned that he was operating in Montreal under the name of George Cook. Before they could lay their hands on him he had married within a few days of the appearance of the advertisement; obtained \$400 from the trusting woman on the pretext of opening a store in Vancouver, and disappeared.

They followed the trail to Vancouver. There they learned that Roediger, using the name George Olson, had staged another whirlwind courtship. He married the girl on December 31st, obtained her money and vanished.

Baffled again, the authorities tried to follow his trail, but failed to pick it up. Then they learned that one of his advertisements had appeared in Edmonton, Alberta. They hastened to that city. There they found that Roediger, early in January, had married Phillipine Strassberger, comely thirty-year-old daughter of a Stony Plain family. Soon after the marriage he persuaded her to transfer all her property to him.

IT was not until July 5th of this same year, 1937, that a grim group of police officers closed in on the small Strassberger farm at Stony Plain. Each approached the house with his gun ready for action.

The men had trailed George Fritz Roediger for too many months to risk failure at the very doorstep of victory. But as they moved nearer the house they were surprised to see the slant-eyed, 55-year-old monster walking toward them, smile—almost a smirk—on his thin lips.

"Can I do something for you men?" he asked politely. "I'm the owner of this place. Looking for some one?"

Each of the officers recognized him immediately. But there was no lowering of guns, no returning of smiles.

The Sergeant in charge spoke.

"You're George Roediger, aren't you?" he asked.

"Why, ye—yes" said the man haltingly. "That's my name." Apparently he had been caught off guard.

"That's all we want to know," the officer returned laconically. "Handcuff him, boys, and let's get going."

And when the "clicks" clicked onto the broad wrists of Roediger, one of the most unusual manhunters in all the annals of Canadian criminal history came abruptly to a close.

In the hope of unraveling the mystery that shrouded Mrs. McKenzie's disappearance, Roediger was questioned for long, tedious hours in his cell at Headingley Jail, Winnipeg. Defiantly he stood his ground.

He at first denied ever marrying Mrs.

McKenzie; but after he had been shown pictures of himself and his bride, he confessed to a bigamous union with her at Barrie, Ontario. However, he denied any knowledge of her whereabouts or of her fate.

Roediger reached the end of his unparalleled career, embracing innumerable swindles and the mysterious deaths of women who became his victims, on July 15th, 1937. On that date he was led before Magistrate R. B. Graham, of Winnipeg police court.

STOLIDLY he pleaded guilty to charges of bigamy and theft growing out of his marriage to Mrs. Regiting, whose modest fortune of \$900 he stole.

He was given the maximum penalty provided by law on each of the two charges. In pronouncing sentence on the stocky bigamist, Magistrate Graham voiced the view of scores of officers who had joined in the long hunt.

"Roediger," said the Magistrate severely, "I have a report of you which shows you to have one of the most astounding criminal records I have ever read. It is manifested in that record that you are a menace to society and to women. And I feel that the country at large should be

protected against you."

Roediger stood tight-lipped and expressionless as he listened.

"The maximum penalty," continued Magistrate Graham, "is seven years for bigamy and the maximum sentence for theft in the amounts you have taken is nine years. I sentence you, therefore, to seven years on the bigamy charge and nine years on the theft charge."

Just before the sentence was pronounced, Roediger, alias Rogers, alias Cook, alias Brown, alias Olson, through his counsel, John L. Ross, replied in the negative to the Court's inquiry as to whether or not he had anything to say.

His shoulders stooped slightly as he was led away to his cell. Weary of his long flight from the law, Roediger appeared ready to have it all over with. He waived all right to appeal and asked that he be transferred immediately to the grim, gray prison at Stony Mountain.

"Roediger is in jail," declared Chief of Police George Smith, of Winnipeg, "but this case is by no means ended. We intend to follow it through and have been assured that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police will do likewise until we have determined what really happened to Mrs. McKenzie."

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Trapping the Slayer of the Blonde Beauty

(Continued from page 16)

Neil corroborated it in detail. Nevertheless, I went to Landis' bunk and made a search. I went through his belongings and searched his bedclothing, but there was no white cotton sock to match the one filled with sand. In fact, his socks all were black ones.

I telephoned No. 12, and Sergeant Liverman told me the place was alive with newspaper reporters. I therefore asked him to bring Landis to No. 4 Precinct Station where he would not be disturbed, and I met them there. Sergeant Thornton and Detective Ennis were with Liverman.

We went to the trial board room, and I asked Landis why he carried the revolver and nightstick in his car. His reply took me aback.

"Listen, Sergeant," he said, "if I had killed my wife, I would have got rid of that gun and stick, wouldn't I? I realize they make me look bad, but I had them only for protection. There have been a lot of cases of robbers jumping on the running-boards of cars, you know."

He added that he had obtained the weapons while a member of the District of Columbia National Guard, two years earlier, thinking he might need them to preserve order on duty at strikes.

I noticed a spot on the lobe of the rookie's right ear, walked up to him and examined it with my thumbnail. "That looks like blood," I said.

He appeared startled, but not for long. "I cut myself while shaving," he explained.

"Take off your coat, Landis," I ordered him. He wanted to know the reason for the request, but finally obeyed.

The sleeves of his blue fireman's shirt, removal of his coat revealed, had been cut off above the elbows. The job of cutting was ragged, as if it had been done with a knife. Landis said he had removed the sleeves because they interfered with his sleep at night.

"Did you have that shirt on when you reported for duty last night?" I asked.

"Sure."

"That's a lie, Landis! You had to stand inspection when you reported and your

superior officers never would have let you by with that shirt!"

"Okay, Sergeant!" His attitude of complete calm now changed to vexation. "Don't get excited. I cut the sleeves after coming off watch. It had slipped my mind."

"What did you do with the sleeves?"

"Burned them in the heating stove at the fire house."

"Why?"

"Because I didn't want them lying around, in the way."

I looked him squarely in the eyes for what seemed like a long minute. Then I accused him.

"You burned those sleeves, Landis," I told him. "You had a good reason for doing it."

He did not appear in the least disconcerted. There was no flicker suggesting fear or guilt in his manner.

"I've been expecting that," he retorted.

"A fine police officer you are—trying to pin a murder on an innocent man—a fireman, at that, one of your brother officers in public service!"

He went on to declare that he had no reason to kill Blanche; that there was no insurance on her life to benefit him, and that she had caused him no trouble.

"Anyway, I've got an airtight alibi for the night," he added.

"Alibi nothing!" I snapped. "There's not a person who saw you at the fireboat between one A.M. and four A.M. You had plenty of time to sneak away and murder your wife!"

After that, Landis closed up like a clam. He wouldn't even answer "Yes" or "No" to our questions. I was puzzled, for I had never seen a person, either innocent or guilty, assume that attitude when charged with a crime that might send him to his death. He appeared to be absolutely indifferent, confident that he could prove himself innocent.

Since we were getting nowhere with Landis, I suggested that Sergeant Liverman and Thornton go to the fireboat and look around, on the theory they might note something I had overlooked; per-

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haps obtain some evidence that the young man had been away during the early morning hours. I then went to Casualty Hospital.

My two fellow officers went over the situation at the fireboat thoroughly, but found things much the same as I had. Firemen who had been on duty during the night were still there—and, after talking the case over among themselves, they seemed unanimously positive that Landis could not have been away. Particularly certain was Fireman Earl Bingham, who occupied the bunk next to Landis.

"I'm positive that Jimmy didn't leave his bunk between one and four," Bingham asserted. "I'm a light sleeper and I would have heard him. It's very quiet in our sleeping quarters—you can even hear the drip of water from a leaky faucet on the next floor—and every little noise awakens me."

At the hospital, I relieved a precinct detective assigned to watch over the unconscious girl. The hope that she would give us any information seemed to be a forlorn one, however, as hours passed without a word from her.

A LITTLE after noon, Anthony Guffre, an uncle of Blanche, called at the hospital. The doctors didn't want to admit him to the room, but Guffre pleaded with them. Blanche was devoted to him and his wife, having often stayed at their home. He declared sincerely that he believed his niece might be roused by his presence, and that she might tell him what had happened.

Guffre came into the room and sat on a chair near the bed. Lines of sorrow were etched in his face. He took the girl's hand in his and called her name. "Blanche! Blanche! This is your Uncle Tony! Say something to me, Blanche!"

She stirred. Her hand tightened in Guffre's palm. Her eyes opened. A faint smile came to her lips. "Uncle Tony!" she murmured.

"What happened to you?" Guffre asked. "Who beat you? Tell me, Blanche!"

Her form shook with a shudder. Tears gathered in her eyes. But she did not answer. She seemed to be unable to comprehend his words.

"Was it your husband?" Guffre inquired. "Did Jimmy beat you?"

Full consciousness seemed now to come to the girl. She lifted herself, with a painful effort, from her pillow.

"No! No!" Her voice now was clear and strong. "Not Jimmy! He didn't do it! It was another man—two men!"

The effort of speaking seemed to exhaust her. She fell limply back on the pillow.

"Who were the men?" Guffre demanded, his voice tense with excitement. "What are their names?"

Again the young woman summoned up enough courage and strength to answer.

"Two boys I knew in high school—in their car—they hurt me terribly—threw me out—"

That was all she said. Guffre pleaded with her in vain. She could not hear him.

My theory of the husband being guilty was now knocked into a cocked hat. His wife had declared him innocent. Furthermore, the men at the fireboat evidently were ready to testify that Landis had not been away during the night.

"Looks as if we'll have to find another suspect," I told Liverman when we met again at No. 4 Precinct Station, where the iron fireman had been locked in a cell. "The case against Landis is getting weaker all the time."

The young husband gave us the names of a dozen youths who had been in high school with him and Blanche. Liverman

set out to check up on them and I began locating girl friends of the victim.

I found Emily Scroggins at her home, her eyes red and swollen from weeping over what had happened to Blanche. Emily was not particularly fond of James Landis, being resentful for his having parted from his wife, but she did not believe him guilty.

"Blanche told me she was going out with another man, not with Jimmy," Miss Scroggins said. "She was deeply in love with Jimmy, but I had advised her to forget him. She said she was going to do that, that she realized he didn't love her."

From other girl friends of the victim, I learned that she and Jimmy had been seeing each other regularly. He often spent evenings with her in her room. And Blanche had confided to one of those friends that she was an expectant mother! Landis was the father of the unborn child. Blanche had been involved in no affair with any other man.

Sergeants Liverman and Thornton, meanwhile, dug up one likely suspect out of the names Landis had provided. He was Gerald Burton, twenty-four years old, a government clerk. He had known Blanche in their school days and had been in love with her.

Furthermore, Burton had been away from his apartment until six o'clock that morning, and he had no adequate explanation for his absence.



These articles, the victim's shoes and purse, a stone and makeshift sandbag, were found near the unconscious form of Blanche Landis. They proved of aid in the investigation

"I was out with a married woman," he said. "I won't tell her name, because it would break up her home if I did. We were out in my car and visited a number of night clubs across the District line in Maryland."

That alibi has been used countless times by criminal suspects, but Burton insisted it was true. We finally took him and Landis to Headquarters. It looked now as if we would have to free Landis in a few hours. There was more evidence for, than against him.

Liverman and I made complete reports to our superior, Inspector Bernard J. Thompson, a veteran officer with a record of having cracked many a tough case. At his advice, Bill obtained the names of all youths who had attended McKinley High School while Blanche was there.

The Inspector instructed him to learn whether any two young men from among Blanche's classmates had been together on the previous night.

Badly in need of rest, I lay on a cot at Headquarters and tried to get some sleep. But it was no use. I couldn't help mulling the case over in my mind, and it kept me awake. After about an hour I received a telephone call.

"I've been reading about the Landis case in the papers," a woman's voice said,

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"I was out with Blanche last night, but I didn't kill her. It was an accident. I didn't think you could find out I'd been with her, and I didn't want to be mixed up in the case. Nobody would suspect that I saw her—or so I thought—because she had promised Emily Scroggins and other girls not to see me any more."

He went on to admit stealing away from the fireboat shortly after one A. M. and driving to the lodging house. He had intended to beg off watch earlier, but had changed his mind. Blanche had joined him in his car. They had driven through the Maryland towns of Mount Rainier and Hyattsville. His further account follows; but it should be kept in mind that it was his own version, and that the girl was not there to deny any lies he might tell in an effort to protect himself.

"I ASKED her to let me cut down the \$45 a month I was paying her," he said, "but she wouldn't consent to it. I got angry and we quarreled. She said she'd go to court and make me pay or else have me kicked off the Fire Department.

"I started to drive her to her rooming house. As we were riding along Taylor Street, I reached inside my shirt to loosen my undershirt where it was binding. She must have thought that I was reaching for a gun.

"She started to jump out of the car. I sped up to stop her from jumping, but she jumped, anyway. She hit the ground awfully hard. I stopped the car and started to pick her up, but she seemed to be dead. I got my hands stained that way."

Landis said he became panicky, fearing he would be blamed for murder; that he returned to the fireboat, washed his hands and cut away his stained shirt sleeves.

The fireman signed a statement giving that story, but would not admit having purposely caused his wife's wounds, although that he had brutally injured her

was evident. We quoted statements of doctors that the girl could not have been hurt in the way he said, but he seemed unimpressed.

Blanche recovered consciousness for a brief while that afternoon. Dr. Braden was in her room. Realizing that she could live only a few hours, he pleaded with her to tell him who had beaten her. Sergeant Livermore was present at the time. "You may die," Dr. Braden told her.

Blanche sighed deeply.
"Tell Jimmy to come and see me," she murmured.
"Tell him to see what he has done to me."

Those were Mrs. Landis' last words. She died at four-thirty the following morning.

James Landis was indicted a week later. He pleaded not guilty to murder charges and was placed on trial June 13th, 1938, before Justice Jesse Adkins. The Prosecutor was Assistant United States Attorney Cecil R. Heflin.

Justice Adkins refused to allow admission of Mrs. Landis' last words in evidence as a death-bed statement, on the grounds that she had not been told definitely that she was going to die. All other evidence as given in this story was presented, however. In his defense, Landis repeated his account of Blanche having jumped from the car.

The jury deliberated less than four hours. The accused man was found guilty and sentenced to life in the Federal Penitentiary at Atlanta, Georgia. The Federal institution was designated because the District of Columbia has no place corresponding to a State prison for confinement of such convicts as he.

Landis cringed and whined like the criminal he was as he was led away to spend the rest of his life in a cell. We of the Washington police had scant sympathy for him.

For obvious reasons, the actual name of one of the characters in the foregoing story has been withheld, and a fictitious one substituted, namely: Gerald Burton.—Ed.)

The Maid Remembers a Killer

(Continued from page 45)

taken in the prison. She looked slowly at one after another, drawing them from the stack as she would cards. When she reached the fifth picture, she almost dropped all of them.

"That man is the killer!" she exclaimed excitedly.

She was pointing to the picture of William Gibson Smith.

"See his eyes—the curl of his lips," she continued. "He murdered Cox! That's the man!"

I felt myself breathing a deep sigh of relief. The last link in the growing chain of evidence had proved as strong as I had hoped it would be. Without hesitation, Miss Mendonca had pointed to the picture of the man whose fingerprints had been left on the bedroom closet door jamb the night Cox had been killed. She had kept her promise, to "remember that face as long as I live!"

We sat and looked at each other, without saying a word.

Then, "We're not through," I said. "We must establish the fact that he was in Sacramento that night. We must determine what he did with the gun. We must substantiate your identification. This may take weeks. Don't mention it to any one. I shall advise you of any important developments."

On June 29th, I decided to go to San Quentin, and have a talk with young William Gibson Smith.

He was called out of the captain's office and we went into a small room. There was a questioning expression on his face. He did not know who I was or what I wanted of him.

After we sat down, I stared him in the eye and said:

"Well, Smith, you thought you could get away with it, didn't you?"

His eyes narrowed a bit and he said:
"Get away with what?"

"The murder of Elmer Cox in Sacramento, during a burglary the night of January 3rd, 1936."

"I NEVER murdered anybody," he replied, his eyes darting away from me. That shot had hit him hard, and he couldn't conceal his agitation.

"That's no use, Smith," I said. "We have the goods on you. We have all the information we need to send you to the gallows. You don't have to admit it. I don't want you to confess anything. You can deny it all you want to—we'd be glad if you did. It would make it easier for us."

"I'm not asking you to admit anything; but I am going to tell you of the evidence we have against you."

"You know, Smith, after you killed Cox, thoughts of the shooting preyed on your mind. You kept thinking of that man on the floor, unable to defend himself while you fired shot after shot into

him. You were afraid that some day you would be identified as the murderer. You knew the slaying was witnessed—witnessed by the maid in the Durkee home. You knew that maid got a good look at you when she turned on the lights in the bedroom. You believed she would remember your face; that sometime she would see your picture and point to it and say: "That's the man who killed Cox."

"You probably were sorry you had not murdered the maid, too, so there would be no witness to your crime. However, so long as the maid lived, you figured, your crime would find you out—there was somebody who some day would point to you as the killer."

I stopped a moment and regarded Smith. His mouth curved in a sneering smile as he said:

"I don't know what you're talking about. Sounds like a fairy tale!"

"You know very well what I'm talking



Still sneering, the slayer of Elmer Cox (right) is led to the courthouse by Deputy Sheriff Jesse Leech for his preliminary hearing

about. The trouble with you, Smith, was that you were so afraid of being discovered, you couldn't keep your mouth shut. You talked to a cellmate."

His eyes flashed at that, and his body tensed. "You talked to a cellmate," I repeated, "and made him promise to rub out the maid who witnessed the shooting. And when you leaned against the jamb of a closet door with your left hand, firing at Cox with your right, you left some fingerprints.

"Those prints, Smith," I continued, leaning forward, "compare exactly with the prints you placed on the record cards when you entered San Quentin. And you know that fingerprints don't lie."

He said nothing.

"And on top of that," I said sharply, "the maid in the Durkee home has identified your picture. She chose it from among several, and when she saw it she said: 'That is the man. He killed Mr. Cox. I'd never forget his face!'"

Smith's muscles relaxed and his hands slumped into his lap. His head leaned forward and he muttered:

"You've got the right man. Let's get

it over with."

I felt elated, but I tried not to show it.

"Of course I have," I replied, "but I repeat that I'm not asking you for a confession. If you want to talk, that's up to you. We don't need a confession. Anything you say won't help our case against you at all. And it won't help you, either. You need not expect a confession to win any clemency for you. We have all we possibly need to convict you."

Smith pondered awhile, then said:

"Well, I might as well tell you about it. You seem to have the goods on me, anyway. If that rat hadn't squealed, or if that maid hadn't seen me, you couldn't pin anything on me."

"How did you happen to shoot him?" I asked. "Were you in the habit of carrying a gun and being ready to shoot if discovered in a house? You were pretty young then. You're only twenty-four now, aren't you?"

"I thought he was shooting at me," Smith replied. "When he shoved his gun at me and told me to put up my hands, there wasn't anything else for me to do but start shooting."

"It was a cold-blooded murder," I remarked, "the way you fired repeatedly as Cox lay on the floor, unable to defend himself."

"NOTHING cold-blooded about it," Smith argued. "He had a gun pointed at me. There was nothing for me to do but shoot first. I continued firing, because I thought he was shooting at me. I thought I heard bullets hitting over my shoulder. Later, I realized they were just empty shells, flying back from my own automatic."

That sounded like a poor excuse, but Smith continued to talk, to tell the whole story, and to clear up two points which had been a mystery to us—the place where he stayed in Sacramento, and what he had done with the murder weapon.

Before he began talking for the record, however, I called in R. H. New, Captain of the Guard at San Quentin Prison, as a witness, and Reporter T. E. Daniels to take Smith's statement in shorthand.

Smith, the roving type of burglar who never stayed long in one city, had spent the Christmas holidays of 1935 visiting his father in Reno, Nevada. While there, he committed several burglaries, stealing a .32 automatic pistol at one place.

He told me he had never used a gun on the job until the night of the Cox shooting.

"I went to Sacramento from Reno and registered at the Y. M. C. A. about three days previous to the shooting," he said, his eyes traveling from me to the reporter.

"After the shooting I stayed at the Y. M. C. A. for the rest of the night and left the next afternoon by bus."

His opening statement was made nonchalantly. I watched him closely. He had the youthful appearance of a college boy. Dressed properly and on the street of any town, he would ordinarily pass unnoticed as a good-looking, law-abiding lad. But on closer inspection one noticed was something about him peculiar to criminals of that type. An underlying hardness—cruel lines to his mouth—something smoldering in his eyes. On the surface, he was a nice boy. Underneath, he was callous—unprincipled.

"How did you happen to be at 1124 Forty-seventh Street?" I asked him.

"I was just prowling around."

"What occurred while you were there? How did you happen to shoot Cox?"

"I was just prowling this particular house and I heard some one coming down the hall. There was a man standing with

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a gun. He made no effort to drop it, and as I was excited, I shot before I realized what I was doing."

"How many times did you shoot?"

"Four times."

"What did the man say?"

"He said, 'Don't shoot.'"

"What did you do immediately after you shot him?"

"I climbed out of the window, dodged down back of houses. I finally reached the Y. M. C. A. where I was staying, and I spent the rest of the night and the next morning in my room. The next afternoon I packed and checked out."

"Where did you go from Sacramento?"

"I checked out and caught the bus for Auburn where I spent the following week visiting friends."

"What happened to the gun?"

"I kept it until I returned to Los Angeles, where I disposed of it by going down to the beach and throwing it as far as I could out into the sea."

There were the answers to several questions we had asked ourselves during the past two and one half years.

WHILE police cars were cruising the neighborhood and detectives were gathering clues at the scene of the shooting, the slayer was slipping through back yards and down alleys, keeping out from under street lights and stealthily making his way downtown—to a place where we certainly would not look for a criminal, the Y. M. C. A.

The next day, he went to a town about forty miles away and hid out. Then, he returned to Sacramento and rode a bus to Los Angeles.

But his crime preyed on his mind. It was his first murder. He wanted to get rid of that dangerous bit of incriminating evidence—the lethal weapon.

Therefore, soon after he reached Los Angeles, he went to Long Beach, walked to a dark section of the waterfront while the tide was out, then followed the receding water to its very edge before throwing the gun far out over the breakers.

His stopping at the Y. M. C. A. gave us some information we needed. He had registered there under his own name—William Gibson Smith—and that definitely established his residence in Sacramento at the time of the killing.

Smith told me he debated whether to take the gun the night he entered the Durkee home. He insisted he had always previously and since then worked without a weapon. His decision to carry the gun was only one of his many mistakes.

Three months after he went to Los Angeles, he entered a home in Beverly Hills and ransacked the place during the absence of the owners. Finding nothing of value, he decided to await the return of the occupants and rob them of their personal belongings.

He was seen in the house, however, and the police were notified. He was found hiding under a bed.

Under the questioning of Los Angeles police, he confessed to burglaries in Washington, D. C.; Shreveport and New Orleans, Louisiana; St. Louis, Cincinnati, Fort Worth, Los Angeles, San Diego, Glendale, California, and Beverly Hills.

Previously, however, he had been arrested only once. That was in New Mexico, where he was held on suspicion and released for lack of evidence.

While being taken to the Los Angeles Courthouse for trial, he broke away from his captors. He was pursued through heavy traffic for several blocks and finally shot down by Lieutenant C. H. Anderson when he refused to halt.

Later, he was convicted on a charge of first-degree burglary and sentenced to San

Quentin for a term of from five years to life.

He did not mind that sentence. He figured prison was the best possible place for him to hide. After a few years there, he reasoned, he would be safe from detection, as far as the Cox murder was concerned, after he got out.

While in prison, however, the picture of the slaying appeared time and again in his thoughts and dreams. The existence of Mary Mendonca, the maid who saw him and witnessed the shooting, caused him mental anguish. Then he decided to tell someone about it.

* * *

Smith was taken to Sacramento and arraigned before Superior Judge Dal M. Lemmon on July 13th. He entered pleas of not guilty and not guilty by reason of insanity.

His trial was set for August 23rd.

A jury of nine women and three men was chosen that day, and the Prosecution played its trump cards. Police officers, including myself, told the story of the murder, and of the confession. The telltale fingerprint was exhibited. And, as a climax, Mary Mendonca leaned from the witness stand and pointed to Smith, identifying him as the slayer.

Smith was the only defense witness and he admitted the attempted burglary and the shooting of Cox.

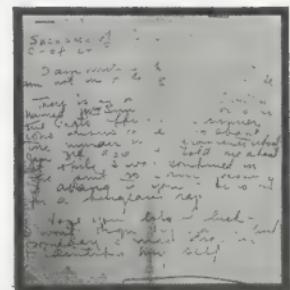
He testified he was excited and nervous when he saw the war veteran pointing a gun at him. He said he never had fired a gun before, and he repeated his story that when his ejected shells whizzed over his shoulder he thought Cox was shooting at him.

THE jury, on August 25th, returned a verdict of "Guilty." Its refusal to recommend leniency spelled doom for the killer.

The following day, he withdrew his plea of not guilty by reason of insanity. And the jury's decision made a death sentence mandatory.

Because the crime was committed before California's new lethal gas execution law became effective, Smith will have to mount the gallows and drop through the trap with a noose encircling his neck.

The execution—which will be delayed by the legal technicalities of an automatic appeal to the State Supreme Court—will take place at Folsom Prison, only thirty miles from the scene of the crime. That is, unless executive clemency steps in to spare the life of a killer who showed no mercy to his victim, or the State's high court sees fit to order a new trial.



The anonymous note written by a former cellmate of the murderer. It paved the way toward the solution of the mystery that had baffled authorities for two and a half years.

Wanted! Raymond Duvall, Fugitive!

(Continued from page 48)

a joint," he said. "I used to work over at the Potts Machinist Company. I know the place, and it's a cinch for a pickup."

Duvall agreed to the plan, and on March 23rd they descended upon the Indianapolis factory.

But Clayton Potts, the 74-year-old proprietor, on being ordered to raise his hands, refused to comply. Glaring at Jackson, whom he recognized as a former employee, he told him to put away his pistol. His heroic resistance infuriated the novice gunmen. There was a deafening report and Potts spun to the floor, mortally wounded. The bandits then fled.

Throughout the summer and early fall, Jackson and Duvall were fugitives from an indictment which named them both as Potts' murderers. Sought by Indianapolis police, they took refuge in Muncie, fifty miles away, and began to plot their next crime.

ON the afternoon of September 9th, O. W. Storer was seated on the porch of his home, enjoying the fragrant Indian summer breeze. Calmly he smoked a cigar, and his deliberate motions were watched with impatience by hidden eyes.

Finally he arose, stretched and went inside the house. A moment later two silent figures slipped from their hiding places and crossed the street. One of them rang the door bell.

Storer, who was now seated in the library of his house, turned to his wife. "Wonder who that is?" He put down a magazine that he had just taken from a rack. The bell rang again, more insistent than before.

"Maybe it's a telegram," suggested Mrs. Storer.

Her husband shrugged, and went to the front of the house. Peering through the curtains, he saw no one. He opened the door and looked out. As he did so, he was struck a blow that made his senses reel. Rough hands thrust him indoors.

Alarmed at the sound of the scuffle, Mrs. Storer came running into the hall. One of the intruders made for her, and forced her to return to the library. From his pocket, he took a roll of wire and another of adhesive tape. He bound the woman to the chair and strapped the tape across her eyes.

"Now sit there and keep still," he ordered.

Storer was given the same treatment.

Covering both victims with their revolvers, the men explained their mission. "We want money and you'd better give it to us quick. If you don't—" The bandit jabbed his gun in Storer's ribs.

"There's some cash in the desk drawer," said the latter. "Take it."

One of the gunmen went to the desk. Throwing the contents on the floor, he came across a billfold, containing \$15. "Chicken feed," he snapped. He held up a bank book. "This is what we want. You're going to telephone the bank and have them send some money over."

"How can I do that?" pleaded Storer.

"Tell them that it's an emergency—that you broke your leg and can't get out of the house, and that you'll sign the papers over here."

Menaced by the revolver, Storer had no choice but to obey. He was led to the telephone, while the men who stood guard over him held the gun to his temple. "One wrong word and I'll fire," was the threat.

Storer did as he was told. The auditor of the Muncie Banking Company, a woman, promised to come over with

\$2,000. Time passed. Finally the auditor arrived. When the door opened to her ring, she entered unsuspectingly. No sooner had she crossed the threshold than she was seized. One hand was clapped over her mouth, while another grabbed her pocketbook. Her eyes were then taped, and she was thrust into a chair.

The purse, containing \$2,000—in large bills, was quickly rifled. Leaving their three victims straining at the wire bonds, the thugs left.

When the auditor failed to return to the Muncie bank, some one telephoned the police, and it was then that the crime was discovered. Due to the fact that the blindfolding had been taken place in lightning-like fashion, Storer was the only one who had glimpsed the criminals. After a perusal of the rogues' gallery, which listed the photographs of all Indiana fugitives, he identified Jackson and Duvall as the perpetrators.

Wanted now for two crimes, the pair fled the state, went eastward and finally contacted Amos Eugene Ward, a former inmate of the Indiana State Reformatory, whom Jackson had met during his confinement in that institution. This man, who lived in Charleston, West Virginia, had plans for a bank robbery and invited their participation.

Weeks of preparation followed and, on January 19th, 1938, the trio invaded the First National Bank of South Charleston, West Virginia. Threatening employees and patrons, they forced them to the rear of the bank and ordered them to lie face downward on the floor. One of the bandits used considerable profanity during the proceedings and threatened to take a hostage. However, he was dissuaded from this by the leader. As they left with \$39,800 in loot, one of the men, who carried sawed-off shotgun, discharged the weapon into the floor. The slugs ricocheted throughout the room. No one dared to move until the roar of the getaway car echoed in the distance.

SINCE the crime was a violation of the Federal Bank Robbery Act, the FBI took a hand immediately upon learning of its occurrence, and Special Agents from the Huntington, West Virginia, field division office sped to the scene.

With the FBI, the West Virginia State Police, and the police of Charleston and Huntington cooperating, it was learned that the getaway car was a 1936 blue Ford sedan, bearing license plates that had been stolen in Pennsylvania. On the evening of the 19th, the car was found abandoned on the outskirts of Charleston, and a check on the motor serial number showed that it had been stolen from that city on January 11th, 1938.

The license plates also linked the bandits to a holdup in Wilmington, Delaware, the preceding July; but aside from this offered no aid to the investigators.

However, the search for clues was unexpectedly spurred on January 28th, when, from Cincinnati, Ohio, came word that two men registering at the Dennison Hotel had indulged freely in liquor and had been spending their money wildly, giving \$10 tips to bell boys and elevator operators. The suspicions of the local police were aroused and the FBI joined in the inquiry. Certain leads were developed which identified one of the individuals as Amos Eugene Ward. The FBI spent three weeks in locating him. On February 15th, at five p.m., Special Agents walked into



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his room and took him by surprise.

Search of his effects yielded \$8,100, identified as part of the loot taken from the South Charleston bank. Questioned as to accomplice in the crime, Ward said that they were known to him only as James Carter and "Whitey."

Cross-checking on the FBI indexes revealed that James Carter was an alias for Leonard C. Jackson. Since he was wanted for two crimes in connection with Duval, the latter's participation in the bank robbery was suspected. When his photograph was identified by witnesses, the link was definitely established.

ON February 17th, 1938, a complaint was filed before the United States Commissioner at Charleston, West Virginia, charging Ward, Jackson and Duval with the bank robbery, and an intensive hunt by Special Agents for the two fugitive gangsters was under way.

From confidential sources, it was learned that Jackson had fled to Washington, D. C., where he had resided during the latter part of January. Continuing on this lead,

Special Agents then traced Jackson to Baltimore. Here, on February 20th, they swooped down on his hideout, and before he had a chance to reach two revolvers on a near-by table, he was handcuffed and put out of action.

Indicted for the bank robbery, both Ward and Jackson were turned over to State authorities for prosecution. On being found guilty they were sentenced to serve terms of sixty years in the State Penitentiary at Moundsville, West Virginia.

Duval was not apprehended. It is known that he was with Jackson in Washington for some time in January, but early in February he separated from his partner in crime.

On February 21st, 1938, the FBI issued an identification order and wanted flyer. These were distributed throughout the entire United States and territorial possessions in an effort to trap the remaining member of the bank robbing gang, whose continued liberty is a menace to the security of any community where he resides.

Secret in the Clay

(Continued from page 33)

I nodded, and he disappeared into the bedroom.

I was beginning to feel a little sorry for this friendly, rather helpless-looking young man. Moreover, I was beginning to doubt that I was justified in taking him off to jail. It had been easy enough to consider him a thief and a murderer in the abstract, but having seen him and talked with him—well, I was far from being sure, now. He simply didn't look the part.

If he had played his rôle as well after walking into the bedroom as he had before, it is not unlikely that the disappearance of Fritz Tro would have remained unsolved. But, like all criminals, John Wirth was a coward. He could not stand up to a real test.

A full minute passed and he did not come out of the bedroom. In a flash I realized that he was not going to.

I let out a yell and flung myself across the room. Mrs. Wirth was in bed with the children. Her husband was gone. Without stopping to question her, I rushed out of the back door.

My companions had heard my shout, and we were piling out of the car. They came running up, breathless, thinking that I might have been hurt. They hadn't seen Wirth leave, of course. In the darkness it had been easy for him to slip away.

I was sick with anger at having been taken in by such a time-worn ruse, but there was nothing to be gained by condemning myself. As George Collison pointed out, there was a redeeming feature to the situation.

"We know he's guilty, now, Sheriff. An innocent man wouldn't have run away," he observed.

"That's some comfort," I acknowledged. "And if you didn't see Wirth the chances are that he didn't see you."

"He probably hasn't gone very far, either," Doc Young put in. "He'd think you wouldn't try to hunt for him tonight, so he's just hiding out until you leave."

We withdrew a short distance from the house, out of earshot of Mrs. Wirth, and held a brief conference. As a result, Emil Schmidt and Doc Young crept across the yard and hid behind the windmill; John McGinn concealed himself near the road; and George Collison took up a station in

the runway between the house and a small shack in the rear.

I got in the car, raced the engine noisily, and drove off in the direction of town.

Once over the crest of the first hill, I stopped the machine and got out. Picking up my rifle, I started back toward the farm on foot. I had not gone a dozen steps when I heard the rattle of gunfire. This is what had happened:

As soon as I drove away, Wirth—thinking that I was alone—had emerged from a near-by cornfield. Collison had seen him, but, not wishing to shoot, had let him reach the house. Then, he leveled his rifle. "Hands up!" he called.

Wirth threw up his hands. At the same instant he ducked behind the shack, and ran. John McGinn fired several shots after him before he disappeared into the cornfield. When I arrived a few seconds later, Mrs. Wirth had come out of the house and was wailing that "John was killed." McGinn shook his head at me—not without some regret.

"NOT a chance" he declared. "I didn't even wing him."

"It's just as well that you didn't," I said. "He probably came back for some money. He knows he can't get very far without it."

"But he won't come back again!"

"No. But he's broke, and afoot, and without a change of clothes. He can't hide out indefinitely. And the minute he shows himself..."

I went into the house, and called Miss Lulu Shaw, chief telephone operator at Kingfisher, giving her a description of the fugitive.

"I want you to get out a general alarm," I concluded. "Spread the word to every town in the county."

"Right away!" she replied crisply.

Leaving Mrs. Wirth under guard, I started back to Kingfisher. And as I drove, the officers of the law in a dozen Oklahoma towns were answering the insistent summons of their telephones. First the officers, then the farmers throughout the region, were crawling out of their beds; listening to the grim warning that came over the wires:

"Watch out for John Wirth, suspected of murder. Age about thirty-four; height, five feet, eight inches; weight, one hun-

dred and fifty pounds. He is bareheaded; wearing a cheap brown suit. Wirth probably be dirty and in need of a shave. Unarmed, but desperate. Take no chances with him."

That the message would get results I was confident. Wirth might manage to hide for days, or even weeks, but sooner or later the law would claim him. He was trapped as surely as if he were still in his house; he only had more room to move around in.

There was one point, however, about which I was definitely worried.

What had Wirth done with Fritz Tro's body? Without that, it would be extremely difficult to prove his guilt. And he had had practically two weeks in which to dispose of it.

Tossing restlessly on my bed that night, I began to realize just how crafty Wirth had been. He had not killed the old man at the first opportunity, stripped him of



"We know he's guilty now, Sheriff. An innocent man wouldn't have run away," declared George Collison, Kingfisher County Jailer (above), who aided Sheriff Long in the investigation.

his valuables, and fled. He was far too shrewd, and he was playing for bigger stakes. He had waited, observed Fritz Tro's habits, learned his history. Not until all the facts were before him did he strike.

Now, in the absence of the body, who was to prove that Tro was not off on one of his frequent sprees? And if he never returned who could say that he had not died, unidentified, in some distant city; or that Big George had not slain him for his money? Wirth's word might be doubted, but Big George—with his predilections for bootlegging, gambling, and loafing—would stand no chance whatever in a courtroom.

We had to find the body. Not only to prove Wirth's guilt, but to establish George's innocence.

The next morning, as soon as I had eaten breakfast, I returned to the Tro farm. A number of farmers and townspeople were already congregated there, and we immediately formed several searching parties.

Tro weighed more than three hundred pounds and was about six feet tall. Thus, the consensus was that Wirth would not have attempted to move him very far; and that, in any event, he would not have tried to bury the body except where the soil was already broken. The earth of the farm was of a hard clay type in which it would be difficult, indeed, to dig a grave

large enough for a man of Tro's size.

We probed beneath the floors of the outbuildings, and scattered the refuse of a trash pile. In the latter were several charred remnants of Tro's clothing, but nothing else of importance. We walked through the cornfield, row by row; then across the land that Wirth had ploughed. But while we found several suspicious-looking hummocks, excavation revealed no sign of the body.

Some one recalled that Wirth had been seen burning a straw stack in the pasture, and several of us went down to sift the ashes. It was while we were at this task that Emory Lowry, a barber who was searching with another group, noticed Tro's dog, acting peculiarly.

The animal would paw at the ground, whine pleadingly, then run in circles. Barking sharply, he seemed to be trying to attract the attention of those around him. Lowry investigated, and came to me.

"I think I've found something, Sheriff," he said. "Come and take a look, will you?"

I followed him to a place near the barn where the ragweeds grew profusely. Here a patch of the hard clay swelled gently upward. And where it blended with the verdant weeds, we saw something in the red, baked soil.

I CALLED for assistance, and several men with spades and shovels responded. Carefully, they scraped away the earth. And little by little the body of Fritz Tro appeared.

The grave was no more than thirty-six inches deep, and was hardly six feet long. No wonder Wirth had coughed so impatiently the night that Earl Young had visited Tro! He had a grave to dig before morning, and to dig a foot in the clay was real labor.

Because of his size, which made dressing and undressing difficult, the old man was in the habit of sleeping in his underwear, socks, and shirt. He was so clothed now. His feet were tied together with several neckties. There were wounds in his head.

We rolled the body into a wagon sheet, preparatory to removing it to town, and I went back to the house.

I could not discover the murder instrument, which apparently had been an axe; nor would Mrs. Wirth answer my questions. But the bedroom floor, despite the fact that it had been scrubbed, revealed stains; and the trail led out of the back door. It was easy to reconstruct the crime. Wirth had slain his victim in the room, tied his feet together, and knotted a rope between them. Then, hitching a horse to the other end of the rope, he had dragged the body to its destination.

With Mrs. Wirth and her children, I returned to Kingfisher at once. I left the youngsters at my home, in care of my wife, and lodged their mother in the county jail. The woman still refused to talk, and I soon discovered the reason for her reticence. But, meanwhile, there were other developments in the case.

While we had been carrying on our search for Tro's body, a tired and dirty man in a brown suit stopped at a farmhouse six miles east of Okeene, Oklahoma, and asked for something to eat.

"Just anything," he begged. "Anything!"

The farmer's wife considered him doubtfully. "Could you eat some eggs?" she asked.

"Sure, eggs will be fine!"

"All right, then." She opened the door to him. "Come inside and wait. I'll have to go down to the barn and get some out of the nests."

(Continued on page 71)



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TRUE DETECTIVE MYSTERIES

(Continued from page 69)

He accepted the invitation, and she hurried to the barn where her husband was working. Excitedly, she told him of her caller.

"It's probably Wirth," he decided. "Go ahead and get the eggs. I'll walk back to the house with you."

He spoke to the man in the brown suit pleasantly enough when they reached the house. But while his wife was cooking eggs and making coffee, he stepped into another room and called Undersheriff Pierson at Okeene. Pierson promised to come out immediately.

The farmer went back into the kitchen, and tried to make conversation with his hungry visitor. Evidently, however, the man's suspicions had been aroused. He bolted the meal, swallowed the coffee scalding hot, and left with the hastiest of thanks.

He had gone perhaps a hundred yards across a field when Pierson and his son arrived. Shouting for him to halt, the Undersheriff took aim with his rifle.

Wirth—for it was he—halted. In broad daylight, in an open field, there was nothing else for him to do.

He was taken to jail at Okeene, and I was notified of the capture. But, misunderstanding the name of the town, I went to Hitchcock for him. There I received a call from Mrs. Emory Brownlee, wife of a Kingfisher attorney, advising me of my mistake. She also warned me not to bring the prisoner to Kingfisher as mob violence was threatened.

THE city of Watonga had a good, strong jail, and was a safe distance away, so I took Wirth there. After a few days the temper of the people cooled, and I returned him to Kingfisher.

Arraigned before Judge H. E. Hopkins, on October 6th, 1915, he and Mrs. Wirth entered pleas of not guilty and were remanded to jail without bond. The preliminary hearing was set for October 8th.

Until this time, and even after the preliminary hearing when they were bound over to the district court, neither Wirth nor his wife would discuss the case. Wirth would lie flat on his back in his bunk, hardly deigning to rise, even, for his attorney. When questioned about the murder, his one reply, if he bothered to answer at all, was, "I don't know nothing."

The jail was not very large, and his cell was only a short distance from that of his wife. When any one tried to talk to her, or so much as approached her, he would start shouting in German for her to keep her mouth shut.

She obeyed him. It did no good, to take her into the office for questioning. She still remained silent.

In all probability this silence, if it had been maintained to the end, would have made her the victim of a grave injustice. Fortunately, before the day of the trial, Mrs. Wirth's brothers arrived from Texas. They bore no love for Wirth, and with good reason. The prisoners had shot one of them from ambush, a few years before, with almost fatal results. He had been tried for attempted murder, and was convicted. But he had escaped the penitentiary, and was even now a fugitive from Texas justice.

They understood Mrs. Wirth's reluctance to talk. She was deathly afraid of

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Master Detective

"This sand looks to me as if it had been disturbed," the miner said.

"Dig it up," Donahoe ordered. "It looks right."

The officers set about their grim task. Within a few minutes every member of the searching party was there, waiting while the sand flew from a half-dozen shovels.

Three feet below the surface, something wrapped in green oilcloth and tied securely with rope, was exposed to view.

The search was over. The great, silent Mojave Desert had yielded up the body of Mrs. Leona May Schmidt.

* * *

Immediately after being informed of the discovery, Toole and I, accompanied by Ross, Detective Ryan, Police Stenographer H. J. Rozzen and Detectives L. E. Sanderson and Thad Brown, of Central Homicide Squad, started for the grave.

Arrived there we found that the body was still in its makeshift crypt, awaiting the arrival of the Coroner from the near-by town of Lancaster. As we approached, Ross removed his hat. A mo-



In this hallway the life of Leona May Schmidt was brought to an untimely end

ment later he stood staring down at the results of his handiwork.

Sanderson then took a statement from the prisoner, which was recorded by Stenographer Rozzen.

"Ross," Sandy began, "do you identify the object that you see in that grave as something you have seen before?"

"Yes."

"What would you say was in that bundle?"

"The body of Mrs. Leona May Schmidt."

"Do you know how it happens to be in that grave?"

"Yes. I dug the grave and put it there."

Ross then described in detail the murder and the subsequent disposal of the victim's remains. He declared he had marked the grave with a crude cross.

"I notice there's a slit in the oilcloth over the face," Ryan observed. "How do you account for that?"

"I happened to think at the last minute that I'd forgotten to take her false teeth out," Ross replied. "I cut a hole in the oilcloth with my pocketknife and removed the teeth in order to forestall identification. Might as well have left them in, though, because I forgot to take her wrist-watch off. It's still on her arm."

"What did you do with the teeth?" I asked.

"Threw them away on the way home. I've no idea where."

"And the shovel?"

"I tossed it out of the car into a ravine."

Incidentally, neither the teeth nor the shovel was ever found.

Soon afterward the body was taken to Lancaster. Later it was removed to the Los Angeles County Morgue, to await an inquest.

Police Chemist Ray Pinker examined the murder house for physical evidence. On the floor of the hallway where the woman had been slain, he found dark stains. A section of the wall had been newly painted, Pinker observed. After he had applied a certain powerful chemical to the plaster, scattered bloodstains were plainly discernible to the naked eye.

Police Photographer L. C. Davis took several pictures of the interior of the house, to be used later in court at Ross' trial.

That night Toole and I had our first satisfying sleep in many weeks. All that remained now, we thought, was to take Ross into court and secure his conviction on a charge of first-degree murder. A surprise awaited us, however, for two nights later the jailer telephoned that Ross wanted to see me immediately.

It was four-thirty in the morning, and I was dazed with sleep when the telephone rang.

"Can't he wait until morning?" I grumbled.

"Well, he's been pacing the floor of his cell like a caged lion. I believe he's got something on his mind that's worth hearing."

"All right, I'll be right down."

I DRESSED hurriedly and drove to the station. Ross was sitting on the edge of his cot. He jumped up to greet me as I was admitted to his cell.

"Lieutenant," he blurted out, "I want you to know this: Ever since my wife tried to commit suicide a few years ago, I've waited my chance to kill her mother! I've planned this crime for years; I've waited until I thought I could get away with it."

"Well, that's interesting," I said calmly. It was apparent that Ross was in an extremely overwrought condition, and I wanted to put him at ease. "Why did your wife try to kill herself?"

"Because she was tired of suffering! She was sick and she knew she couldn't get well. The bullet is still over the sink in the kitchen." He buried his face in his hands. "I had the most wonderful wife in the world," he added. "We lived together seven years and there was never a cross word between us."

I put my hand on his shoulder. "You'd better try to get some sleep, Ross."

He stood up suddenly, threw back his head and lifted his arms in a gesture of despair. "There's something else I've got to tell you," he said dramatically. "You think I'm Val Ross, I'm not! My right name is Fred Nile Shirly and I come from one of the finest families in Massachusetts. I've had a wonderful education, but I've made a terrible mess of my whole life!"

I could think of nothing to say in answer to this.

"And that's not all!" he shouted. "I've got a wife and two kids living in Colorado! I've been a rat all my life, but I'd give my soul to see those kids once more."

"Well," I said, "it's too late now to be thinking about all these things. Suppose you try to get some sleep. That is, unless you've got something else you want to tell me."

"No, Lieutenant, that's all. I just wanted to get these things off my mind. The only consolation I have is that I'll probably be dead of tuberculosis before the State gets a chance to kill me."

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Master Detective

by their mother.

"Mummy, shall I run for a doctor?" Ingeborg asked.

"No," she was told, "your papa isn't that sick. We can't afford it."

The next day Emil March complained about a feeling of general illness, about having difficulty to see, to swallow, to move. He could hardly talk.

A week later his wife had him transferred to the Hietzing Josefs Hospital; there he passed away before the end of the month, officially filed as a pneumonia case.

During August, only a fortnight later, Ingeborg Marek became ill and was soon on the critical cases list of Vienna's Wilhelminen Hospital.

During the morning hours of September 2nd, Martha Marek, her son, Alfons, tripping beside her, visited her dying daughter.

"Ingeborg will be happy soon," the mother whispered into the little boy's ear. "Ingeborg's going to heaven, where your daddy is!"

At six that evening, Ingeborg Marek was dead, with hospital authorities in a dilemma as to just what had been the cause and origin of the child's illness.

The widow and desolate mother had to make a living. Strangely enough Martha Marek turned insurance agent. Still a beautiful woman of youthful appearance and proud bearing, she found it rather

she had experienced when a thirteen-year-old child. The only difference was that instead of a doddering septuagenarian, young and dapper Jenoe Neuman was now her steady companion.

Toward the end of 1935 their funds were exhausted, but their hunger for life was stronger than ever.

It was at this juncture that Martha, for no obvious reason, took a modiste, Felicitas Kittenberger, as boarder into her swanky apartment. A few days later Mrs. Kittenberger, for the first time in her life, signed a life insurance policy. Notwithstanding the fact that she had a son she made Martha Marek the beneficiary.

Only a month after that the unfortunate woman fell ill of a mysterious ailment, manifesting itself in dizziness, partial paralysis, and a sudden inability to see.

One day late in May the bell of the Marek apartment rang commanding. The maid opened. Outside stood a young man, his face pale, his voice loud with excitement.

"My name is Kittenberger. May I see your mother?"

He was ushered into a room where he soon sat face to face with Martha Marek.

"YOUR mother, my dear young man," she told him calmly, "must not be disturbed. She's very sick and I feel in a way responsible for her well-being."

"But she sent me a message! She wants to see me!"

The hazel eyes in the madonna-like face narrowed. "Felicitas sent you a note? I don't believe it."

The young man jumped to his feet.

"I'm sorry to say, Mrs. Marek, but I don't think your house is the right place for my poor mother to get well. I have an ambulance waiting downstairs. I'm going to take her with me." And he added significantly, "Just try to stop me—I know where the next police station is!"

"Very well," Martha Marek replied haughtily, "do as you wish. I realize I was a fool to expect gratitude."

Upon her arrival at the hospital, the poor woman's condition was at once pronounced very grave. Within a few days Felicitas Kittenberger's eyesight failed completely. On June 2nd, 1936, she passed away. Two days later Neuman collected the dead woman's policy and handed the money over to Martha.

A few months went by. Young Kittenberger was swayed between respect of his mother's last wishes and the ever demanding voice of his conscience; this inner voice of his kept on harassing him to determine the cause of his mother's death and yet he was hesitant to act in the matter.

Maybe he would have let things rest, had not Martha Marek and her friend, Neuman, suddenly become front page news!

It was a chill day in October. Dr. Loewenstein had left his house for a few minutes to buy a paper at the corner news stand.

Upon his return he found the entrance door open. In the hall, Martha, who had been spending the evening with him, stood crying with excitement.

"Why, what has happened?" her uncle demanded, greatly disturbed.

A pair of arms twined themselves around his neck. "It's too terrible for words," his niece moaned. "Why did you have to leave . . ."

Loewenstein, despising scenes, put her arms down. "What is the meaning of all this?" he demanded in an irritated voice. "Tell me what happened!"

"Burglars," she replied, sobbing. "They must have sneaked inside while you were out. They stole all my Persian rugs."



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Martha Marek seated in court during her sensational trial for the poison slaying of four persons

easy to solicit prospects. It was during this period that she met a fellow insurance agent, Jenoe Neuman—and like others before him Neuman fell deeply in love with her.

The beginning of 1934 saw Martha dismissed from the insurance company's sales force. The records say that she embellished clients' payments.

In May of the same year she moved into the house of her great-uncle, an army physician and Colonel, Dr. Loewenstein. Supposedly a companion and nurse to her ailing great-aunt, Martha's entrance into her relatives' house was again accompanied by strange and sinister events.

In June, 1934, Mrs. Loewenstein became seriously ill, suffering from an unexplainable general paralysis of her entire system. Five weeks later she rested in the cool earth of Hietzing cemetery.

This time Martha inherited jewelry, silver, valuable rugs, furniture and cash.

Almost at once she took to high living, leasing a ten-room apartment on one of fashionable Hietzing's tree-shaded avenues. She bought an elegant wardrobe, a speedy Steyr cabriolet, and, in short, enjoyed fully all the things life had denied her for a long time.

For about a year and a half Martha led a gilded existence similar to the one

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The old soldier's brow wrinkled. "The ones you gave me as security for a loan? Why, how could anybody get away with eight heavy rugs in such short time—without being noticed? Is everybody around here deaf and blind?"

"What are we going to do?" Martha cried hysterically. "Why don't you do something?"

"I certainly will," her uncle replied. "I shall call the police at once."

Detectives attached to the nearest police station arrived speedily. They took in the scene, listened to Martha, to the servants, and to Dr. Loewenstein.

It struck the officers as strange indeed that there were no footprints in the rain-drenched soil of the garden. Like Dr. Loewenstein they were skeptical. They did not see how eight heavy rugs could be carried away unnoticed, within less than five minutes. The third clue to blast Martha's fantastic story to bits was the fact that the cases in which the rugs had been kept showed all too clearly that they had not been used for quite some time.

FOOLISHLY enough Martha stuck to her tale, seconded by her friend, Neuman, who had arrived in the meantime; and also by her uncle, who simply refused to believe that his niece would tell a lie.

The police were sent away and Martha subsequently demanded payment from the company with which the rugs were insured.

* * *

In the middle of November, 1936, Martha Marek was visited by two gentlemen. "We'd like to talk to you about your missing rugs and the insurance policy covering the loss," they announced.

Martha led them into her music room, with its expensive furniture, grand piano, glittering chandeliers and rich tapestries—a magnificent setting for a beautiful lady. But somehow her visitors did not seem the least impressed. Identifying themselves as detectives, the spokesman told her bluntly, "We've been investigating the supposed burglary in Dr. Loewenstein's house, Mrs. Marek. I'm sorry to say that the robbery appears to be an inside job."

"What do you mean by that?" Martha protested.

"Just this." The detective held out a receipt bearing the name of a private loan institution. "At the time of the fake burglary, Mrs. Marek, the rugs were pledged as a security and not in your possession."

She recovered her poise quickly. "Well—I am sorry. It must have slipped my mind."

"The Municipal Insurance Company demands your arrest," she was told. "Will you please come with us?"

There was a dead silence.

Then, with trembling lips, she pleaded, "Please, gentlemen, not now. Give me time—my little son, Alfons, is in the hospital. He's terribly sick—you simply can't take his mother away from him."

"Sorry, Madame, but we've our orders. I arrest you in the name of the law. Follow quietly!"

* * *

At the hour when Martha Marek was taken to Police Headquarters, another, no less dramatic, scene took place in the Vienna Midtown Hospital.

Dr. Rautner stood bent over his little patient, Alfons Marek. In order to be able to understand the child's faint whisper the medical man held his ear close to the boy's mouth. And while he could feel the hot breath of Alfons against his face, feverishly stammered words reached the physician's ear.

"... and mummy told me, 'You're going to see Ingeborg and daddy—soon—for you, too, are on your way to

heaven . . . You, too, will become an angel. Alfons . . .'"

And the child whispered into the startled doctor's ear:

"Is it true that I'll have wings and see my daddy and Ingeborg?"

The eyes of the nurse became moist as the Doctor reassured, "Why, Alfons, no. You'll stay with us for a long time. You'll get well. You'll soon be able to eat anything you like."

"No more pain in my stomach, Doctor?"

And the kindly man at little Alfons' bedside promised grimly, "Your stomach won't hurt you, either. And now try to sleep."

It was her own little son's involuntary testimony, combined with young Kittenberger's demands for exhumation of his mother's body, that spelled Martha Marek's doom.

With District Attorney Seibert and the staff of the Vienna Safety Bureau cooperating closely, the bodies of Emil and Ingeborg Marek, Mrs. S. Loewenstein, and Felicitas Kittenberger were exhumed; Moriz Fritsch's corpse, for some legal reasons, was left undisturbed.

The chemical probe into the death causes of the four deceased was performed by Professor Jahn and Dr. Zawidzinski. It revealed at once the existence of thallium in the bodies.

Thallium is a soft white crystalline substance resembling lead and used in the process of producing glass. Consumed in quantities it will slowly poison the human organism, causing gradual paralysis of the entire system.

Detectives of Commissioner Siancar's squad, directed by Inspectors Lackner and Friedl, now went to work. The lives of Martha Marek and Jenoe Neuman were studied closely, every move traced,



Courthouse building in Moedding, Greater Vienna, where Martha and her young husband, Emil Marek, were imprisoned pending trial for the incredible plot to mulct an insurance company of \$400,000

every available witness called upon to testify.

Neuman fully admitted his participation in the scheme to obtain payment from the Municipal Insurance Company by faking a burglary. He stoutly denied, however, having had any part in the poisoning of Mrs. Kittenberger. All he would admit was that he had merely introduced the woman to Martha Marek as a "prospect."

Martha Marek, on being cross-examined relentlessly, finally admitted that, after her arrest on December 14th, 1926, she had shared her prison cell with a Mrs. Lichtenstein.

The Lichtenstein woman had broken into headlines by having poisoned her husband with thallium. She had accomplished this by feeding him Zefio paste

mixed with his food. (Zelio paste is a common household chemical containing a certain amount of thallium.)

Did Mrs. Liechtenstein teach Mrs. Marek the best ways of poisoning? The accused woman's answer was an emphatic "No."

In prison, she suddenly began to show the symptoms of acute thallium poisoning, such as: loss of hair, partial paralysis, even temporary blindness.

But the prison doctors and chemical experts who were called in were not at all convinced that the woman's symptoms were genuine. The mere fact that she survived to go on trial proves that Martha Marek's case of poisoning was rather a psychopathic than a chemical phenomenon.

The trial, lasting ten days, started on May 2nd, 1938.

The modern Borgia was being tried in the very same hall of the same court where the previous trial had been held, eleven years before. And like her crippled husband, it was now Martha who had to be carried into court on a stretcher.

It was a very different court and a much more hostile public she had to face now—the gloomy atmosphere of Old Aus-Asia had vanished as Hitler's grim-faced legions were marching across the frontiers.

Before the presiding Judge, Dr. Mitten dorfer, the prosecution, represented by Dr. Wotawa, branded Martha as a murdereress, an inhuman mother, a Clytemnestra.

His flaming accusations were scientifically supported by a battery of experts representing various branches of science. And while their voices sounded her doom, Martha Marek reclined in her chair, the radiant gold of her hair faded, her face sunken in, her fine white hands thin and shaky.

Clad in a dark red woolen pullover, her legs covered by a light blanket, she could be seen moving restlessly, her eyes appealing to the row of stern faces in the jury box.

Despite the efforts of the defense, resting with Vienna's famous Dr. V. Granicstaettner and Dr. Bochner, able lawyer, there came the day when the Court rose in dead silence, hands outstretched in the newly adopted Hitler salute.

It was on Thursday, May 19th, 1938, when sentence was pronounced. It imposed the death penalty upon the 41-year-old widow, Martha Marek, charging her with the quadruple murder of husband, daughter, great-aunt and boarder.

Jeno Neuman was sentenced to three years at hard labor and subsequent deportation. Eighteen months' imprisonment while awaiting trial will be deducted thus reducing his term considerably.

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How I Captured Long Island's Ruthless Bank Bandits

(Continued from page 11)

to give proper emphasis to the climax of his story. Then:

"People," he went on, "were starting to run from all directions. I left my Reo standing at the intersection of the streets and ran into the bank. As soon as I opened the door I noticed a smell of gunpowder and saw a body lying on the floor. A girl came in from a rear entrance and I ran out to see if I could get the number of the car. Naturally, I guessed what had happened. All this took only a few seconds. When I looked out I saw that the driver was having trouble getting started, and he went off in second, as one of the bandits shoved a rifle through the rear window and started firing. But I managed to see the number. They picked up speed and drove off along the road, careening madly and zigzagging over the ruts in the direction of Hicksville."

These statements are important. Note them as items for future consideration. Riders in Buick ask for directions to Bellmore Bank the day before the holdup; Mr. Dean notes that the driver has trouble in getting started and that one man has a large nose on a squarish face; Mackin sees the driver of Buick near the bank has the same trouble in starting, sees a man with a large squarish face, and notices that he stumbles as he walks.

IT was nearing midnight before I got through questioning Mackin, and over the telephone it had been arranged that my partners and I would meet at our office in New York City for a conference before calling it a day.

I found Captain Jones and Jack Fogarty waiting for me when I arrived. Fogarty's afternoon had been busy but fruitless, so I will not go into that angle, important though it was in checking out of the picture various suspects suggested by the Police Department and residents of Bellmore and Hicksville.

"This forenoon," Jack went on, "tip came to the D. A.'s office that there were three suspicious characters living in a cottage on the outskirts of Smithtown. Sheriff Amza Biggs went there with a posse of twenty armed men and found them in the yard of the cottage tinkering with a car. He was questioning them when an automobile stopped in front of the house. It was filled with three more young men and a driver. They took one look at the posse and tore down the road at seventy miles an hour. The possemen were too surprised to aim their shotguns and the newcomers escaped."

"The Sheriff found some guns and a blackjack and some burglar's tools, so he brought the men in. He's going to put them in the line-up tomorrow. They represented themselves as three catup salesmen resting after a hard winter, but when I came over to New York and checked up the addresses they gave I found them phoney. I got the instructions to do this checkup over the telephone. When I went back to Mineola and had a look at them, I recognized one of them as 'Limp' Loeb, the brother of the man who drove the car for Chapman and Anderson in the Leonard Street mail robbery."

"Think 'Limp' would have anything to do with a bank job?" I asked.

"No, I don't. The District Attorney wants one of our men to go and interview

the owner of the cottage tomorrow. She lives in Brooklyn."

"What did you get, Bill?" I asked Jones, explaining that my rechecking had uncovered nothing of importance so far.

"Well, as you know," he said in his smooth, husky voice, "I was present when Dr. Seaman performed the autopsy yesterday afternoon. You heard that we found a .45 caliber Smith and Wesson under the body of the bond salesman, Whitman, when the Doctor lifted it?"

"Yes," Fogarty and I answered simultaneously.

"Weeks wanted to know if Whitman had been shot by that gun or if it had belonged to the victim." Jones continued, barely pausing for our answer to his question. "He had, all right. Gee!" he interrupted himself, "that was a battle! In grappling for the gun, they must have fought all over the place. The victim was shot in four places."

"The bandits didn't shoot at Mackin when he ran right by them, nor at any of the bystanders," I remarked. "Why did they shoot Whitman? Maybe they thought that Whitman recognized one of them and they killed him to prevent him from informing."

"THAT'S possible," Fogarty agreed.

"Whitman, I found, had a large acquaintance and he was prominent in politics. He was a war veteran, belonged to the American Legion, the Elks and the Woodmen of America. Before he went to work for the Wall Street house, he was station master for the Long Island Railroad at Patchogue and before that he was a tax collector. Seems to have been a very fine fellow. Another funny thing. It appears that Whitman was supposed to have an appointment with Vanderoef at twelve-thirty yesterday."

"The way I figure it is this," put in the Captain, clinging as is his way, to the one angle until he worried it to death; "Whitman being a big husky fellow was mistaken by the robbers for a cop, and they just decided to polish him off without giving him a chance. When he grappled for the gun of the man facing him, and even got it away from him apparently in spite of his wounds, a second man shot him in the back. The back of the coat is scorched, showing that the muzzle of the weapon was held right against the cloth—and it was that shot from the back that killed him. The fatal bullet was fired from a .38."

While listening to the Captain's theory, I was reading the reports of the operatives who had gone to investigate the two stolen cars.

The operative on the trail of the Buick owners stated that he had not managed to locate the Smallwoods. They had left their house on Madison Avenue without even a caretaker in charge.

"Julius Presses," reported the other, "is an electrical contractor. He was seated at a small table in the kitchen holding his handkerchief to his eyes when his mother ushered me in. His mother said he had been very nervous ever since his license plate had been connected with the murder. When Presses removed the handkerchief I saw a big red blotch or bruise on his cheek. He told me he had been having trouble with his eyes and that the doctor said he ought to wear glasses. He said he had never been arrested or in trouble with the police. His car, he stated, had never been stolen before and he claims that he was upstairs in his apartment when his auto was stolen from in front of his house. (Discrepancy here—neighbors say he was not at home then.) He insisted that he reported the theft immediately to the police station. He is

about five feet, eleven inches, broad-shouldered, thick curly hair, narrow eyes, thick lips, smooth shaven . . . between twenty-five and thirty years old and claims he was in a builder's home discussing a contract at time the robbery was committed."

When I finished reading this report, I found Jones and Fogarty discussing a notorious—or famous, as you will—roadhouse run by a man named Barney Wiegand in North Bellmore. This, it seemed, was one of the places that rumor said Vanderoef frequented, sometimes with a woman friend.

The Bankers' Association's detectives were busy on the job, and Fogarty had heard echoes of their inquiries regarding his question. "He had, all right. Gee!" he interrupted himself, "that was a battle! In grappling for the gun, they must have fought all over the place. The victim was shot in four places."

"The bandits didn't shoot at Mackin when he ran right by them, nor at any of the bystanders," I remarked. "Why did they shoot Whitman? Maybe they thought that Whitman recognized one of them and they killed him to prevent him from informing."

"Just how far through the mazes of Long Island villages my trail would take me I had no idea, so I took the precaution of picking up Charlie Townsend, one of the boys connected with the District Attorney's office, who had a car and knew the county thoroughly.

We first dropped in on Marjorie Kunz, the young girl who had first reported the finding of the Buick to the District Attorney.

FROM reports, I expected to find Miss Kunz of the flapper type. In this I was pleasantly surprised. Though rather excited by her first experience in the limelight of newspaper publicity, she told a fairly well connected story.

"About twenty-thirty," she said, "on my way back to work after lunch I saw two cars coming up the Newbridge Road at a terrific rate of speed. They reached the corner about the same time I did and were turning into Cherry Street going east. They were simply tearing along and almost clipped me as they passed. One was a Buick and the other a Hudson coach. Half way up the block the cars stopped and three men got out of the Buick and stepped into the Hudson coach and they went off. Two of the men in the Buick were well dressed and one was not so well dressed—he was fat and seemed to be sick or drunk. He let himself walk loose-like. They almost had to lift him in.

"When coming home from work about five-thirty I saw the Buick car with the back window broken. I had heard about the Bellmore robbery in the office, so I telephoned in to Bellmore where the assistant district attorney was examining eye-witnesses. That's where the alarm said the news should be sent."

"Now, Marjorie," I warned her, "I want you to be very careful. My experience is that young people are apt to draw on their imagination. Are you positively sure of what you have said?"

She hesitated. "Well, I'm not positive about its being a Hudson coach that they

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transferred to. Maybe it was an Oldsmobile. It was one or the other. But I am sure of the men. I couldn't describe them, but I would know them if I saw them again—especially the man with the moon face and the big nose."

I wasn't so sure that she had given me the right information, however. But I didn't say so at the time because I didn't want to hurt her feelings. I bore in mind that the girl must have been terrified at the rate of speed at which the cars had whizzed by her, and, as she described it, "almost clipped" her. In such a state it was unlikely that the appearance of the men would register sufficiently on her consciousness for her to recall them. Also, the cars stopped almost "half way up the block," she said. Therefore they must have been between a hundred and a hundred and fifty feet away from her. I didn't believe she could identify the men at that distance.

In gathering information, it is important to test the reliability of a possible witness testimony, so that we may be sure that her statements will stand up when the defense counsel attempts to discredit them.

FROM Miss Kunz' home we drove to the residence of David Steinert, opposite whose garage the murder car had been found. Mr. Steinert lived in the home of his father, the former Judge Joseph Steinert, who for many years presided in the Long Island City Court.

The garage mentioned, is a double garage, and is located across the street from their mansion, a large red brick building.

Our ring was answered by a pleasant-faced maid who ushered us into an attractive foyer furnished 'in' living-room style. Before we had shaken off the rain drops that had beaded our clothes even during the few moments it had taken us to mount the steps leading to the door, a young man of medium height with sharp-featured, intelligent face entered from a sun parlor.

"I am Dave Steinert," he introduced himself, after we had explained that we were from the District Attorney's office. "I saw the Buick car first at eleven forty-five Friday morning. I am sure of the hour, because I had an appointment with a client who wanted to buy a farm. While I was waiting for her I saw a Buick pass twice in five minutes. It seemed to be driving around the block, and as it was filled with men, I thought they might be businessmen who were waiting for some one. My client came and we left to look at the farm. When I returned about five o'clock I noticed the Buick standing across the street and my father told me it had been there all afternoon. I looked out of the window and thought I recognized the car I had seen that morning. So I went over and examined it. When I saw that the back window had been shot out, I telephoned the police."

"Could you describe any of the men who were in the car that morning?" I asked him.

"No, I couldn't," he said quickly, "but later on, after the police had taken the car away, I heard that Charlie Bergold had seen the men when they were joined by a man in a Hudson coach around noon or shortly before. Charlie Bergold? He's an awfully bright thirteen-year-old kid who lives in a big white house on the hill down the road, just past Krouse's greenhouse. You'll probably get a lot out of him. He's as sharp as a whip."

That was possible, I thought, as we left the Steinert home, for youngsters at that age are always curious and, as a rule, are very keen observers.

The Bergold home is about a city block away from the Steinert place; an attractive colonial house, backed by acres of beautifully cultivated land.

A middle-aged woman with prematurely gray hair opened the door in answer to our knock, and before inquiring our business asked us in out of the rain. We followed her into the library and explained who we were.

"I understand that your boy Charlie saw three men change cars on Friday around noon," I said. "I'd like to ask him a few questions."

While we were talking a tall, well-dressed man and a bright-faced youngster entered the room.

"I don't want to get Charlie mixed up in this Bellmore business," the man objected after introducing himself as Charlie's father.

It took some time to persuade Mr. Bergold that any little bit of information the boy could give us might prove of inestimable value to our investigation. After all, by helping us to capture the gunmen who had killed Whitman, he was really doing something to protect himself.

"Now, Charlie," I said to the youngster when finally he was given permission to talk, "you have heard about the Bellmore Bank robbery, I know. I don't want you



Automobile in picture re-enacts how murder car, filled with bandits, sped off of Cherry Street, Bellmore, to turn onto Old Farm Road and disappear

to tell me anything you heard other people say about it. But tell me if you yourself noticed anything out of the ordinary—or if anything out of the ordinary happened on Friday around noon."

"Yes," he said, speaking in a frank, level voice. "They let me off my exams that day, and I was on my way home when I saw a Buick circling 'round and 'round. It was filled with men. I wondered what they were waiting for, and watched to see. After a while, just as I got near, a Hudson drove up and both cars stopped, blocking the traffic at Newbridge and Old Country Roads. The other cars coming up were honking their horns and getting mad. A man in the Hudson got out and joined the men in the Buick. They seemed angry, and," he interposed with a shame-faced grin, "I was scared to pass them. The Hudson was parked not far from Krouse's greenhouse and that was between me and home—and so I stood there and waited till they left."

I tested his knowledge of the various makes of cars by pointing out various machines that passed his home and asking him to give me their trade-names. I found him well up on that subject.

"Did you hear anything more about the Hudson?" I asked him.

He looked toward his father before answering. "Yes, I heard that a Hudson was left at my uncle's farm down the road a bit. It broke down near there around one o'clock and the men left it in the garage until evening when somebody came from somewhere and towed it away. Of course," he added cautiously, "I don't know if it is the same one."

"Will you let Charlie go with us to his uncle's farm?" I asked the father.

"It wouldn't be any use," Mr. Bergold said. "My brother went fishing this morning and his wife went visiting. You wouldn't find anybody home."

We put in the rest of the day questioning everybody in a door-to-door canvass. There was the chance that some of those angrily honking motorists had noticed the appearance of the men in the Buick, or that we might come across another Hudson lead.

I don't think I need go into all the details of that rainy Sunday's canvass. No two people see any incident exactly alike, but from a mass of accumulative information, two facts stood out: that a Buick car filled with men had been in the neighborhood of the Old Country Road on Friday forenoon and that two cars driving at a terrific rate of speed appeared between twelve-thirty and one o'clock. Several individuals spoke of those two incidents.

Monday morning I returned to the Bergold farm. The rain had left the countryside fresh and fragrant with springtime odors of young grass and budding trees and shrubs. In the fields men were busily plowing, cows were grazing in the pastures, and behind the little white farmhouse, plump, brown hens were scratching.

I intercepted a young woman returning from the hen house with a yellow bowl filled with eggs, and learned she was Mrs. Joseph Bergold.

"We are from the District Attorney's office in Mineola," I said, introducing Charlie Townsend and myself, "investigating the Bellmore Bank robbery. I hear that a car was left at your garage Friday afternoon."

"There was," she admitted. "Won't you come into the house?"

Mrs. Bergold led the way into an immaculately scrubbed kitchen. Her glance strayed to a clock which was ticking loudly on the mantel-shelf.

SO far she had not volunteered any information and I wanted to discover whether or not she was reluctant to talk. I had noted that Charlie's father was reluctant to permit his son to help us at first.

"We'd like to know all about that car," I said to her as we accepted her invitation and seated ourselves. I made no mention of any particular car, for I did not want to put any ideas into her head; people are dangerously inclined to answer "yes" or "no" quite promiscuously to suggestions. "Well," she said thoughtfully, "I don't know what you want to know exactly. It was a dark colored Hudson car."

"What time did you see it first?"

"Around one o'clock in the afternoon, just after my husband and my father-in-law had gone back to the fields after dinner. It was standing on the road near the gate. There were three men in it. Two came in. One asked to use the phone. The line was busy the first time he called and he called again."

At last it seemed to me as though we were on the track of definite information.

"Do you remember what number he called?" I asked.

The woman hesitated, brows knit in thought. Then her lips parted and she leaned suddenly forward.

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